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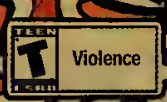

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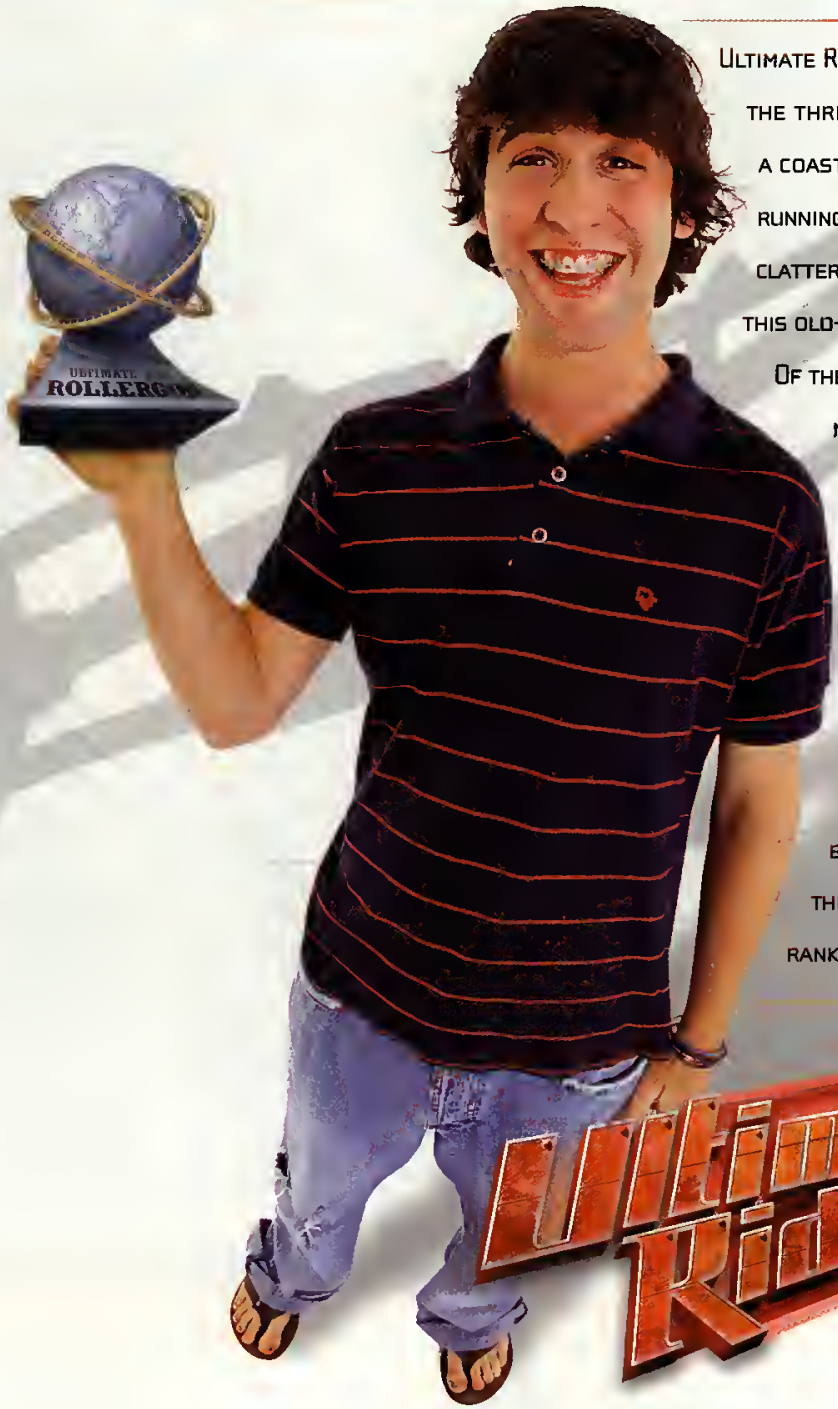

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Ultimate Ride

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Mild Language

PlayStation.2

XBOX

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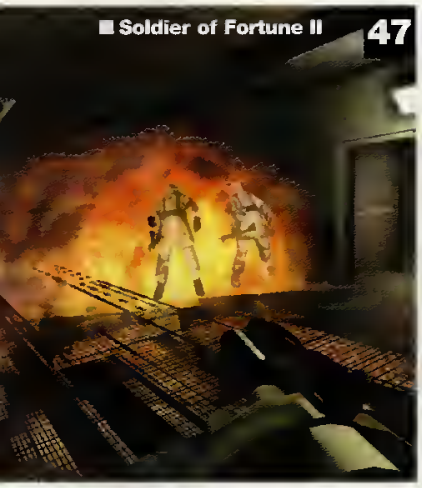

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EDITORIAL

As a magazine dedicated solely to the task of bringing you the best multiplatform game coverage on the planet, it is not in the **Next Generation** charter to comment on any news, however tragic, that does not concern the game industry. But the events that transpired on September 11 have affected us all.

The attack on America came just two days before we closed this issue, forcing many game companies to cancel press tours, product demos, analyst meetings, and more. Based on the many emails we have already received, we are well aware how heavily this has weighed upon you, our readers. You have raised questions as to how this will affect the game industry. Will the impending system launches be delayed? Will games that feature terrorists, such as *Metal Gear Solid 2*, be delayed? At this point, we are left to wonder just as you are, as we spend our spare moments looking to news from the rescue workers for answers to far more important questions. One thing is for certain: As with the rest of the country, the people working in the game industry are a resourceful, hard-working bunch resolved to do the right thing.

The **Next Gen** staff would like to share with you the tremendous sense of relief we've felt as we have discovered our many friends who live and work in Manhattan have escaped unhurt. We hope this issue finds you, and those close to you, safe from harm.

Tom

— Tom Russo

11.08.01

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News

Game industry news and analysis

■ READY, SET, HOLD...

XBOX LAUNCH DELAYED IN JAPAN

Japan-developed games are coming, but Japan's gamers will have to wait

For once, the shoe is on the other foot — come this November, it's the Japonese gamers who will have to buy a foreign videogame console to get it first, as Microsoft has delayed its Japanese Xbox launch until February 22, 2002. The news of the delay was revealed at the Xbox Conference 2001 Summer, held in Tokyo on August 27, but was somewhat softened by Japanese developers Namco, From Software, and Atlus announcing new games in development for the system.

The Japanese delay did not come as much of a surprise, as Microsoft is clearly focusing on Xbox's North American launch. Xbox chief Robbie Bach has already admitted it will be a challenge to crack the Japanese market that has been dominated by Sony and Nintendo for many years. Still, the company had a much better showing than it did at the last Tokyo Game Show, when it oddly showed *NFL Fever 2002* to a country that has no football teams, or apparent interest.

This time around, Microsoft was smart in having developers from well-known Japanese companies showcase games to their countrymen. Namco is bringing *Ridge Racer*, *Soul Colibur 2*, *Deod to Rights* (an Xbox exclusive), and another unnamed title. From Software announced it will develop the robot shooter *Murakumo*, as well as a sim/RPG called *Goio Blode*. Atlus, which has a much stronger market share in Japan than

■ MOVE OVER WAYNE, IT'S...

Spaceworld 2001

A new Mario, Zelda, and of course, a new U.S. launch date for GameCube. (Relax. It's only 13 days later.)

"Always leave 'em wanting more." No company better understands this old showbiz adage than Nintendo. At its pre-Spaceworld press announcement, the company once again proved its mastery of the tease, dangling quick video glimpses of two larger-than-life GameCube titles in front of a worldwide videogame press audience. Predictably, it was the next *Mario* and *Zelda* game, but that's the very reason attendees clung to the edges of their chairs when Nintendo über-designer Shigeru Miyamoto took the stage.

Miyamoto introduced footage of *Mario Sunshine* first. Due next summer, the game featured Nintendo's mascot running through a sophisticated landscape that hinted at more platform action in the vein of *Mario 64*. However, Mario wore an odd contraption on his back, and while the purpose of the device wasn't revealed, we predict that it's been devised to introduce some new form of physics-based gameplay. Miyamoto hinted at a new gameplay mechanic in our interview with him last year at Spaceworld; this year, he would only say that more would be revealed at E3 2002.

But if the announcements and, to an extent, the *Mario* footage were predictable, the *Zelda* footage was not. In a surprise move, Miyamoto had completely redesigned the game's visual style. The complex, high-polygon Link from last year's teaser demo had given way to a youthful cel-shaded hero whose appearance had more in common with skaters of *Jet Grind Radio* than Link characters of yore. The footage showcased cel shading of unprecedented quality, including Warner Bros.-style exaggerated movements and facial expressions, all working in realtime. But not everyone in the audience was pleased with the game's new direction, and although Miyamoto specifically urged members of the press not to videotape the footage, it was available on the web almost immediately. Subsequently, the rest of the world has entered the debate as to whether or not the change in style was the right one. (For more on this, see GameCube Watch, page 30.) In a post-announcement round-table session, Miyamoto explained that the game, which will be released for the holiday season in 2002, had been heading in a direction he wasn't pleased with, and that he felt alienated and uncomfortable with the older-looking Link.

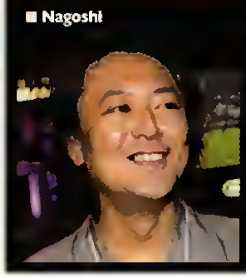
Going global?

Beyond those teaser clips, Nintendo paraded Japan's usual executives to the podium to share the new GameCube release date for Japan (September 14). However, at this "global" conference, they neglected to mention that the U.S. release date would slip from the originally planned November 5 to November 18. After the conference, Nintendo of America EVP of Marketing Peter Main explained to **Next Gen** that the delay was simply to have 700,000 systems available at launch, along with more software. Main hopes to push a total of 1.1 million units in the U.S. by December 31.

"I saw the disaster with PS2 at 480,000 [units]," Main said. "We've got to ensure not only that [GameCube] gets in and sells through, but that we've got the momentum we want going into the holiday and coming out of it. By dribbling and drabbing 450,000 units, then another 100, and another 100, you don't get that big impact. When you consider you've got to leverage marketing dollars strategically, it's a great, great move to insure the biggest bang for the buck."

(continued on page 17)

SPACEWORLD: THE FIRST DAY



■ Nagoshi

■ Naka

While Spaceworld traditionally opens on the weekend for the public, Nintendo built in an "Industry Only" Friday to give Japan's videogame trade a good look at GameCube. The many attendees included Capcom producer Shinji Mikami, employees of Namco, and several heads of Sega's internal studios including Hitmaker's (*Crazy Taxi*) Hisao Oguchi, Amusement Vision's Toshiro Nagoshi, and Sonic Team's Yuji Naka.

the U.S., is working on the tentatively titled *Megami Tensei Online*, which is planned to be the first online Xbox title.

Also on hand was Capcom's Keiji Inafune who showed *Genmo Onimusha*, the Xbox version of the commercially successful *Onimusha* for PS2, which will now allow enemies to absorb souls and increase in power. Konami brought *Air Force Delta II* and *Silent Hill 2: The Final Verse*, while Sega showed the latest version of *Sega GT 2002* and *Gunvolkyrie*. Tecmo presented *Dead or Alive 3*.

Despite the eagerly awaited introduction of Japanese development support, top-tier franchises such as *Resident Evil* and *Tekken* were nowhere to be found. Although Xbox Conference 2001 Summer was a step in the right direction, the world awaits Japanese developers to show wholehearted support by committing the crown jewels of their game franchises.

■ Sega GT 2002

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Blood and Gore
Violence

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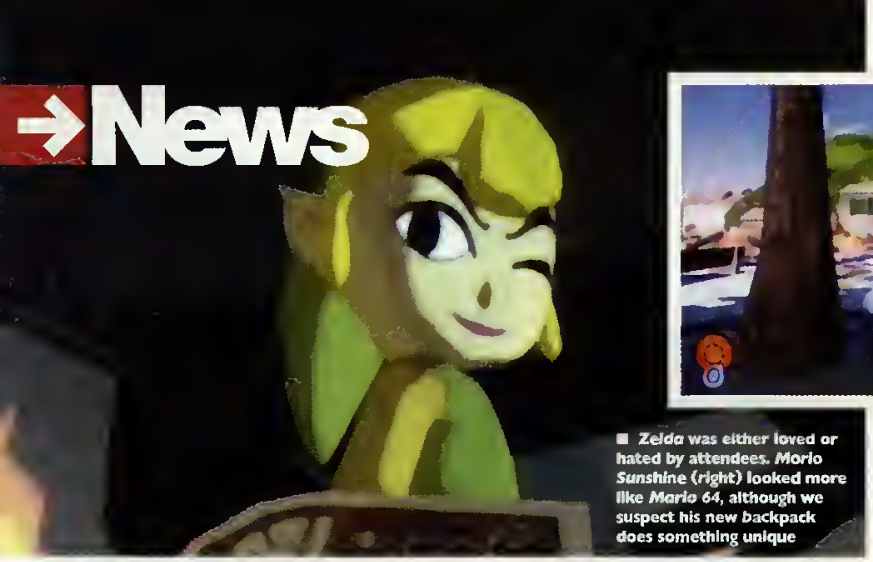
News



■ *Zelda* was either loved or hated by attendees. *Mario Sunshine* (right) looked more like *Mario 64*, although we suspect his new backpack does something unique

(continued from page 13)

Subsequently, on launch day, Nintendo plans to have black and indigo hardware units available, with *Luigi's Mansion*, *Wave Race*, and *Pikmin* on store shelves. The launch will be supported by third-party titles *Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader*, *NHL Hitz*, *Madden NFL 2002*, *SSX: Tricky*, and possibly another one or two titles, although Main wouldn't say which ones.

Down on the show floor

Spaceworld's floor was divided up about equally between GameCube and GBA displays, but on the Friday Nintendo reserved for media and industry only, the fascination with Nintendo's new console had most attendees queuing up for turns on GameCube. Overall, most of the demos were very similar to the ones shown at E3, although everything seemed to sparkle a bit more with added effects, improved lighting, and faster framerates. The longest lines were for *Luigi's Mansion*, while the graphics in *Star Fox Adventures* were the most improved of all titles shown.

EA and Sega had the most third-party titles. Sega's *Virtua Striker 3* offered a more arcade-friendly soccer experience and more visual polish than EA's *FIFA*. EA had *SSX: Tricky* running nicely, while Sega had *Super Monkey Ball*, a splitscreen version of *Phantasy Star Online*, and a very early version of *Sonic Adventure 2*. Surprises included From Software's *Rune* (see Alphas, page 53). One of the oddest new arrivals was a game simply called *Universal Studios* by Kemco, offering a series of mini-games based on rides like *Back to the Future* or classic themes like a shooting gallery.

No new Nintendo system would be complete without a *Bomberman*. *So Bomberman Generation* was on the floor, although it was starting to look a bit dated, with an odd cross of styles this time. Bomberman himself is cel-shaded, while his surroundings are made up of traditional, though minimal, polygons.

Aside from the playable titles, video monitors dotting the show floor looped new clips of several games. The highlights included a few seconds of the *1080° Snowboarding* sequel in development at Left Field productions, *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader*, and a clip of *Metroid Prime*, which wasn't nearly as compelling as we hoped it would be.

Worth the trip?

Unlike the anticipation at last year's GameCube unveiling, Spaceworld this year was anti-climactic. Considering how little was shown of *Zelda* and *Mario Sunshine*, and that most of the demos were nearly identical to those shown at E3, **Next Gen** has to wonder why we had to go all the way across the Pacific to get a new U.S. release date that wasn't even part of the general press presentation. Even our brief meeting with Nintendo's Director and General Manager of Corporate Planning, Satoru Iwata, yielded nothing. We bluntly asked why, two months before the launch of GameCube, the company still wasn't releasing screenshots of the launch games to the U.S. magazines. His weakly delivered promise to "try to do better in the future," certainly did not validate the cost of the ticket. — *Tom Russo*

Next month: We bring you our complete GameCube launch guide — including reviews of the first games.

GAMECUBE GOES GAME BOY ADVANCE

At Spaceworld, Nintendo finally revealed the connectivity features between GBA and GameCube. With a special cartridge and link cable (shown here) players will be able to play a special version of GBA *Kirby Tilt 'n' Tumble*, a game that challenges players to roll Kirby through a maze of obstacles by alternating the angles and heights of the playfield. This is done with a motion-sensitive cartridge, and the game is alternately displayed on the GBA screen and the TV screen. With *Animal Forest*, the link cable will enable players to access a secret area where they can customize segments of the game (via mini-paint programs and the like) even when they are away from the GameCube. The link cable goes on sale in Japan in December for about the equivalent of $13. No word yet as to how much it will sell for in the U.S., or when it will be available.

■ BITS FROM THE EDGE

News Bytes

In business circles, it's known as a Poison Pill. This past August, the now terminally broke publisher Interplay found itself the object of a rather hostile takeover by French publisher Titus. Titus already owned a large chunk of Interplay, but finally managed to leverage that magic 51% of stock to take over the board. However, before that could happen at the next regularly scheduled board meeting, Interplay signed a deal with Vivendi, giving that company (also French) exclusive distribution rights for all Interplay titles in the U.S. — a deal which Titus will now have to honor. Bitter, bitter bitterness all around.

Electronic Arts may have gutted Origin, but it's still squeezing everything it can out of the desiccated carcass. Any time now (by the time you read this), EA plans to launch *Ultima Online* in Korea, trying to find a still uncollapsed vein to feed that country's inexplicable addiction to online titles, especially MMORPGs. Indeed, so fanatic is the Korean market over virtual worlds that guild wars and online rivalries have been spilling over into real life with frightening frequency, with players hiring actual thugs to assault or otherwise intimidate rival players.

In the "bleed 'em 'til they're dry" department, almost every major videogame retailer, including Electronics Boutique, Funco, and Toys "R" Us (through Amazon.com) was only accepting Xbox pre-orders in the form of "bundles." It simply wasn't possible to get by on the cheap by pre-ordering an Xbox (MSRP: $299), then picking up a title or two, along with maybe a memory card at launch day. Oh no, you had to order an Xbox, a set of at least three titles (the exact mix of which varied from retailer to retailer), and a handful of accessories all at the same time. The cheapest such "bundle" went for $499, but the typical example went for $599 or more. This not only put pre-orders out of the financial reach of many, but also meant the hardcore audience was forced to buy titles and other junk they didn't even want. Expect eBay to be flooded with Xbox "B" titles come late November.

And finally, trust Nintendo to give us our monthly dose of déjà vu. After unexpectedly pushing the U.S. launch date of GameCube back two weeks, the Big Red "N" then spectacularly failed to set a European launch date at all (other than "Spring 2002"), even at its own European trade show in late August. The same thing happened with N64 many years ago of course, so Nintendo snubbing the whole of Europe is, really, nothing new.

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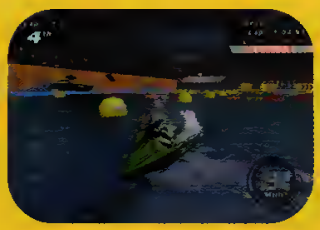
ACTION



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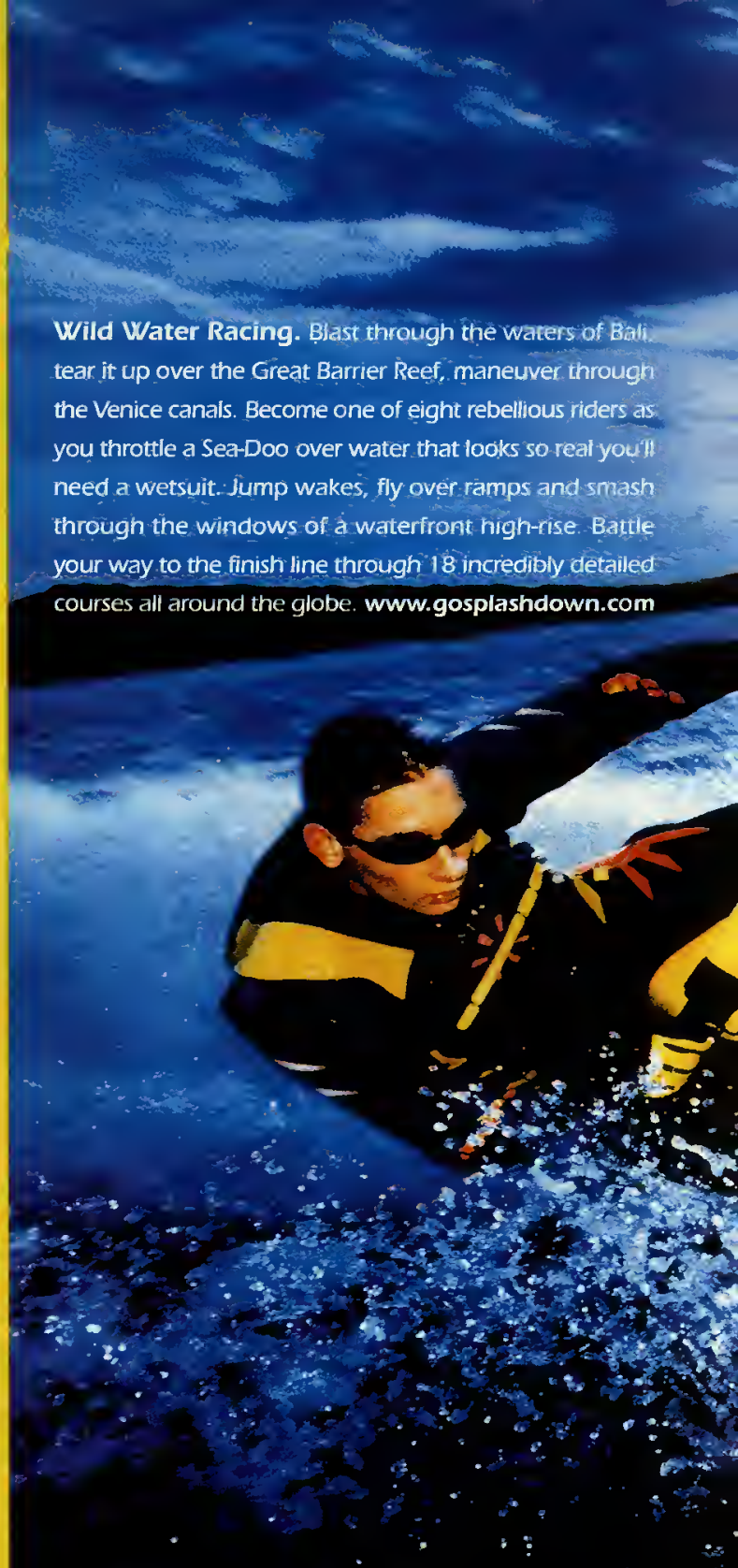

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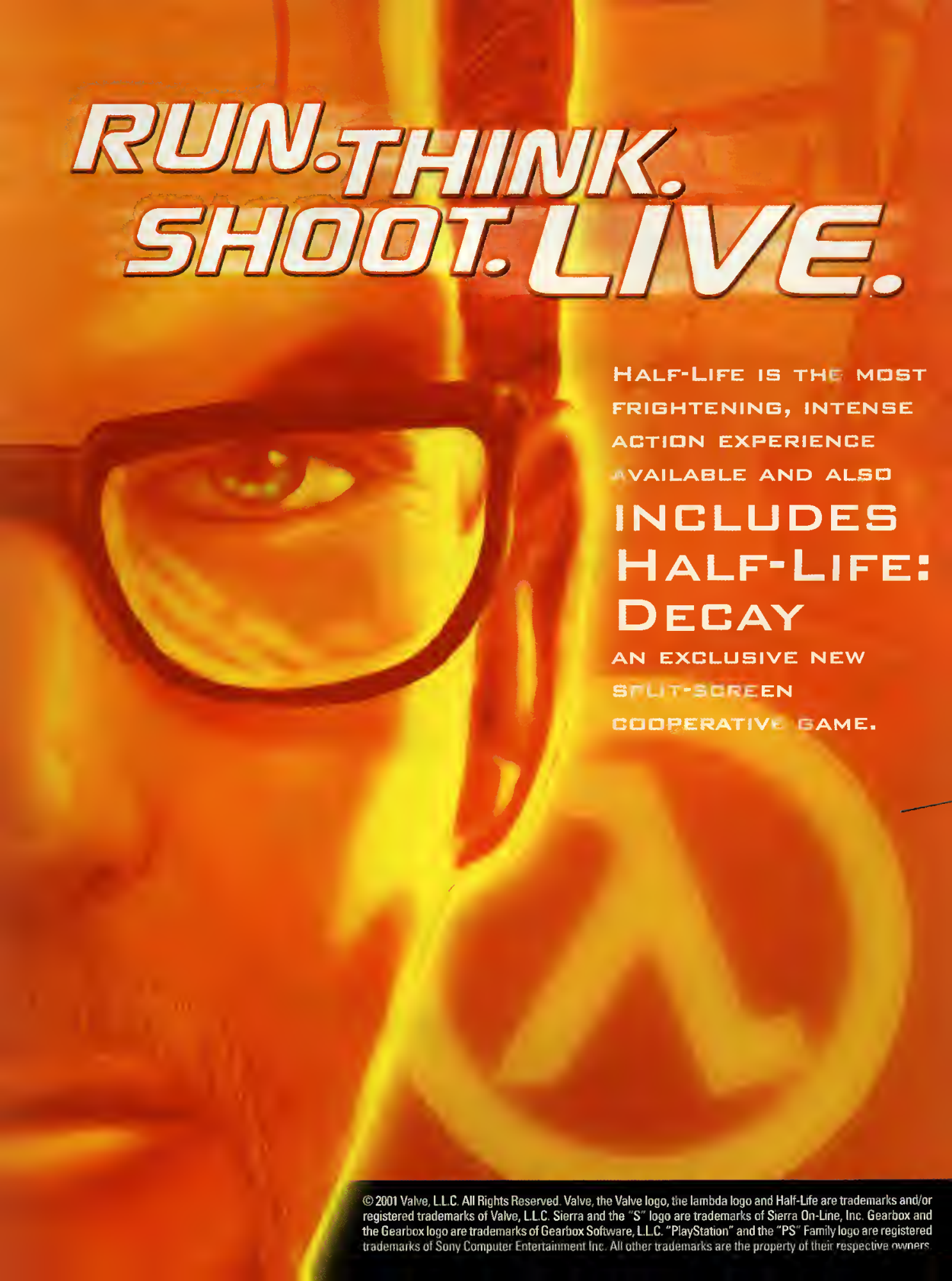

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The X-philes

11/01

Time to put up or shut up

This will be the last X-philes column — and that means it's time for some bomb-throwing. Here are my predictions for the next round of the console wars.

AND THE WINNER IS...

If measured by profits... GameCube. It's far cheaper to manufacture than PS2 or Xbox, and the GBA tie-in is a brilliant hook. Warmer third-party relations mean GC will have a richer library than N64. Plus, Nintendo knows how to do two things. Make money, and make money.

If measured by number of games... PS2 wins. It already has the largest library in the history of videogames thanks to its backward compatibility.

But if measured by market share... Xbox will win. A bold claim, I know. But I'm betting that Xbox's far superior hardware and ease of development, along with Microsoft's deep pockets and relentless marketing, will eke out a victory in units shipped by the fifth year of its life.

Why PS2 won't win... In a recent chat with a sports game producer, he told me his company wasn't even going to port its baseball game to PS2 until its publisher forced it to: "PS2 is too difficult and expensive to develop for. We spend weeks just figuring it out. Xbox comes with better tools and infinitely better support. The nanosecond that PS2 is no longer the market leader, we're going to drop it like a hot rock."

Why GameCube won't win... Nintendo seems perfectly content to be a toy company that makes videogames. Although it can no longer afford to snub its third-party developers, it's still geared toward its traditional, younger, family-friendly market. It sure won't be home to any great online deathmatching in the future.

Xbox's biggest hurdle... Besides the enormous head start that PS2 has, Microsoft's biggest problem is its arrogance. The company's haughty attitude has turned off many Japanese developers, one of whom leaked a video clip to Daily Radar back in March to embarrass its new partner. And J Allard's comments in September's **Next Gen** did little to diminish the company's smug reputation.

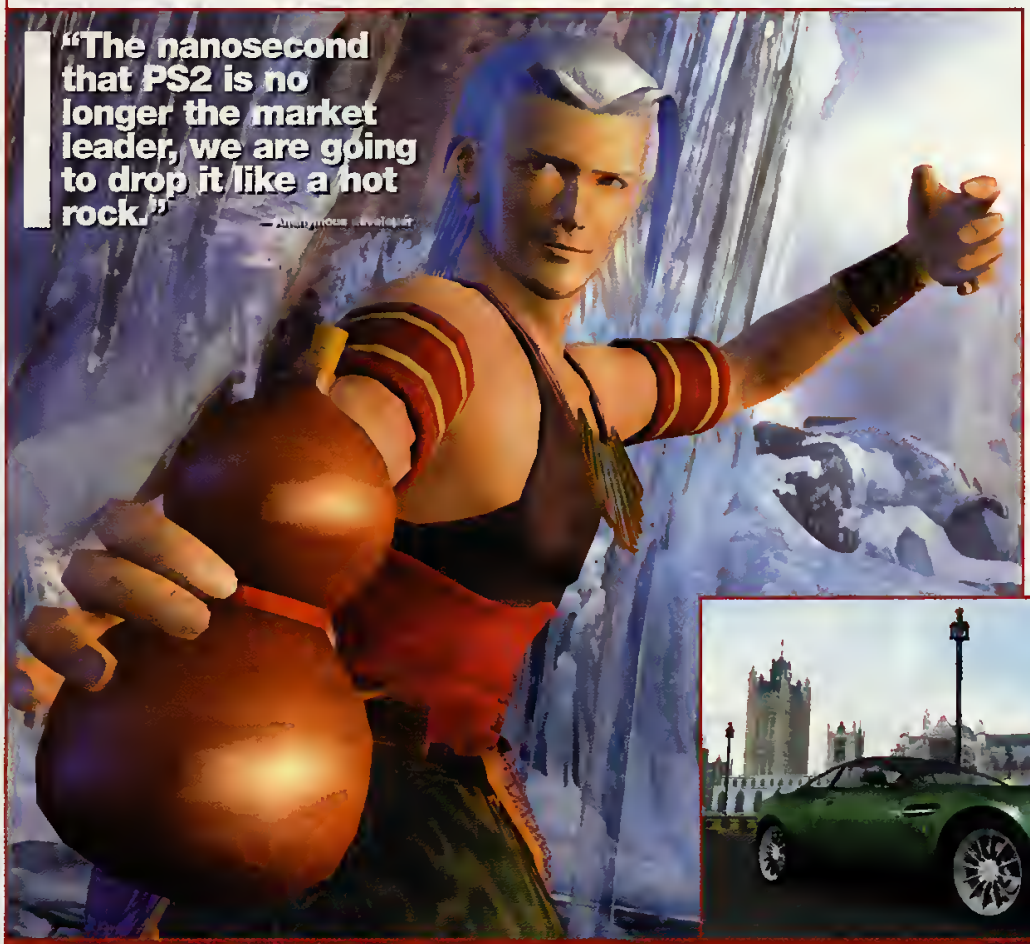
■ **X-philes columnist Jim Preston is the Previews/Disc Editor at PC Gamer**

RATING THE LAUNCH LINEUP

Who needs to review games when you can just take wild stabs based on preview code? Here's my prediction for the Xbox launch lineup:

Best-selling game: *Dead or Alive 3*; worst-selling game: *Fantovis–*, er, I mean *Fuzion Frenzy*; biggest critical boom: *Dead or Alive 3*; biggest critical bust: *Azurik*; most underrated game: *Project Gotham Racing*; most overrated game: *Halo*; most pleasant surprise: *Cel Damage*; most unpleasant surprise: *Obi-Wan* (although those last two games will not make the launch).

That's my take. Hope you enjoyed the column. And if my predictions are wrong, feel free to track me down in five years and tell me so. — *Jim Preston*



■ **Newcomer Brad Wong (above) will mix it up with the deadly ladies of *Dead or Alive 3*. We can't wait to drive *Project Gotham*'s brand-new Aston Martin (inset)**

■ TOM RUSSO'S

In the Studio

11/01

Development news as it develops

INFOGRAMES CAPTURES GODZILLA

Secret sources have revealed that the French videogame giant has secured the rights to publish games based on Japan's favorite giant lizard-thingy. In fact, the monster was last seen wrestling an 18-story Bruno Bonnell (Infogrames' CEO) off the coast of Tokyo. Considering the company's penchant for multi-platform development, we have to believe that games for several systems are already in the works. Note to Infogrames: There has never been a good Godzilla game — ever.

UNIVERSAL MALICE

Perhaps the biggest favor anyone ever did for Argonaut founder Jez San was when Xboz Advance Technology Group Director Seamus Blackley used Argonaut's *Malice* demo as one of the first games ever shown running on Xbox hardware. At the time of this monumental CES unveiling, the game was unsigned to a publisher, and the fact that Next Gen picked the character to appear on the cover shortly thereafter only fueled the hype for a game that wasn't much more than a tech demo. Sources indicate that, sensing an opportunity to cash in on the notoriety, San made negotiations difficult for all interested publishers. However, we hear that a company within the Vivendi/Universal family came up with the publishing rights to *Malice* after months of finagling. Subsequently, we can expect that the little girl with the big hammer will not remain exclusive to Xbox. As of press time, the deal had not been announced, but Vivendi-owned *Sierra* had just announced plans to publish new console games in its *SWAT* series, developed by (you guessed it) Argonaut.

TONY HAWK GLEAMS THE GAMECUBE

Forgive the bad inference to the 1989 skateboarding film starring Christian Slater, in which, ironically, Tony Hawk had the minor role of "Buddy." But Tony Hawk will reclaim his starring role on GameCube, and surprisingly, with a game that will ship within the system's launch month. At press time, we discovered Activision plans to call the game *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* (although, we were hoping for *Tony Hawk* π). Neversoft is developing/porting the GameCube version. In what might be seen as a related announcement, Nintendo has cancelled development of *Mario's Sunshiny Cel-Shaded Skatepark*, which was due to release in 2006.

ECTS 2002 UNDERWHELMS

ECTS, Europe's lackluster version of E3, continues its downward spiral toward becoming a game industry footnote. But a beacon of light in the form of a Blizzard announcement broke through the clouds at this year's sparsely attended show. Blizzard revealed *World of Warcraft* for PC, an upcoming MMORPG with the release date of "when it's done."

The show, held September 2-4 in London, has been on a rocket ride to insignificance for a number of years. Need proof? The award for Overall Best Game of the Show, as voted by a panel of European journalists, went to *Denki Blocks* — a puzzle game for Game Boy Advance.

■ Blizzard's new MMORPG *World of Warcraft*

PlayStation®2

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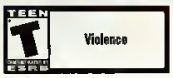
The ultimate off-road driving adventure returns to the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system this fall. Work for an elite band of smugglers delivering contraband, escaping the authorities and attacking rivals. Make the drop, hit the nitro boost and get across the border before all hell breaks loose!

RELEASE DATE FALL 2001

www.rockstargames.com/smugglersrun2



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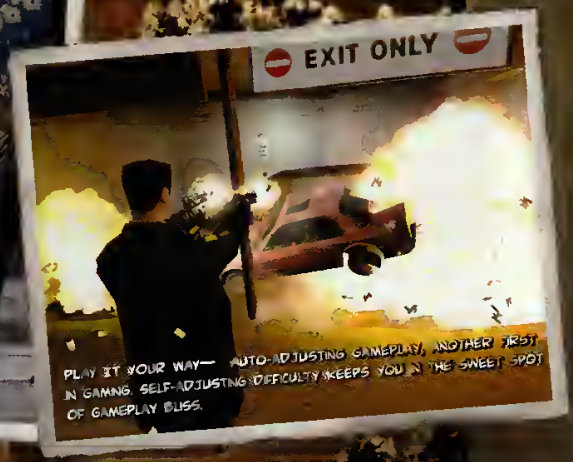
ACTUAL SCREEN SHOT



"HIGH-INTENSITY, TWO-FISTED GUNPLAY WITH HONG KONG-STYLE CINEMATOGRAPHY, COMPLETE WITH PLAYABLE SLO-MO AND BULLET-TIME. THIS GAME JUST ROCKS." —NEXTGEN

"ONE OF THE COOLEST, AND INCREDIBLY SIGNIFICANT THINGS ABOUT MAX PAYNE CAN'T BE SEEN IN ANY SCREENSHOT. IT'S THE STORY...THE STORY IS ALWAYS IN PLAY AND EFFECTS EVERYTHING YOU DO." —3D ACTION PLANET

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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PRODUCED BY 3D REALMS

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XBOX

PlayStation 2

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MAXPAYNE.COM

■ 2001: A CASE ODYSSEY

Attack of the custom-built gaming PCs

Seven out of our top 11 games of E3 were PC games — so what are you going to play them on?

Amid the roar and rumble of PS2, Xbox, and GameCube, a new kind of gaming PC has emerged, thanks to a new kind of PC vendor. They know gamers; they are gamers; and they custom-design monster gaming machines, the tricked-out muscle cars of the PC world. How cutting-edge are they? By the time you read this, they'll have brought to life new packages even more powerful than these. While we have the hubris to give them ratings, any one is guaranteed to rock your desktop.

Mach V

Manufacturer: **Falcon Northwest**
URL: **www.falcon-nw.com**

Processor: **AMD Athlon Thunderbird 1.4GHz**
Memory: **256MB PC2100 DDR RAM**
Hard drive(s): **2x IBM 40GB, in RAID array**
DVD/CD-ROM: **Toshiba 16x DVD/48x CD-ROM**
CD-RW: **Plextor Plexwriter 24x, 10x, 40x**
Video: **VisionTek GeForce3**
Audio: **Hercules Game Theater XP sound card**
Monitor: **22-inch Viewsonic P220f (20-inch viewable) .25 grille pitch flatscreen**
Speakers: **Klipsch ProMedia 4.1**
Extras: **1.44" floppy drive**
Price as configured: **$3995.00***

Falcon eschews any sort of flashy case modding, preferring instead to let the awesome Cooler Master case stand on its own merit. (It's the same case Hypersonic uses, without the window.) While we were dazzled by the enormous 20" viewable monitor, the system benchmarked poorly. Even the HP unit (at right) surpassed it in *3Dmark2001* and *Quake III* — probably due to its slower RAM and processor (though a 1.4GHz Athlon will often run many programs, like *Unreal Tournament*, as fast as a 1.8GHz Pentium). However, you can flavor your unit to taste, and Falcon definitely knows its stuff. Night owls beware: Like Voodoo (see opposite page, top), Falcon's tech support only works 9 to 6.

Rating: ★★★★☆

Sonic Boom

Manufacturer: **Hypersonic PC Systems**
URL: **www.hypersonic-pc.com**

Processor: **1.8GHz Pentium 4**
Memory: **256MB PC800 RDRAM**
Hard drive(s): **2x 40GB IBM Deskstar 7200RPM, in RAID array (76.6GB yield)**
DVD/CD-ROM: **Toshiba 16X DVD-ROM/ 40X CD-ROM**
CD-RW: **Plextor PlexWriter CD-R/RW 24X, 10X, 40X**
Video: **Visiontek Nvidia Geforce3 64MB DDR (w/TV Output)**
Audio: **Creative Labs SoundBlaster Live! X-Gamer 5.1**
Monitor: **19" flatscreen NEC-Multisync FE-950+ .25dp (18-inch viewable)**
Speakers: **Klipsch ProMedia 5.1**
Extras: **Neon-enhanced Cooler Master case**
1.44MB floppy drive
One year — 24-7 technical support and onsite service
Hypersonic lifetime upgrade service
Price as configured: **$3870***

We love the Hypersonic unit's awesome Cooler Master case, with its front-mounted USB ports and "Active Thermal Convective System" (i.e. lots of fans). Of course, transparent side panels and sound-sensitive, blue neon light doesn't hurt either. Hypersonic does it all right: The hardware is competitive with the Alienware and Voodoo rigs; it has 24-7 tech support; and should you decide that your rig needs some fresh gear (like a better sound card), Hypersonic's upgrade policy is bested only by Voodoo's.

Rating: ★★★★★

■ MAXIMUM GAME, MINIMUM GREEN

Pavillion 9800

Manufacturer: **Hewlett Packard**
URL: **www.hpshopping.com**

Processor: **1.7GHz Pentium 4**
Memory: **256MB PC800 RDRAM**
Hard drive(s): **75GB 7200 RPM**
DVD/CD-ROM: **16X Pioneer DVD-ROM**
CD-RW: **12x8x32 CDRW**
Video: **Asus V8200 Nvidia GeForce3 64MB**
Audio: **Creative SoundBlaster Live! Value**
Monitor: **none**
Speakers: **Polk Audio AMR150**
Extras: **1.44" floppy drive**
Front-mounted USB, FireWire, and Serial port
Strange, crazy keyboard
Price as configured: **$2360.00***

So, you don't have 4Gs to drop on a new dream machine? Don't rule out the mass-market boxes. While Dell unceremoniously snubbed our repeated invitation to submit a machine for review, Hewlett Packard's Pavillion 9800 (actually a multimedia machine) performed quite well as a gaming rig, even besting the Falcon in both *3DMark2001* and *Quake III* demos. For maximum gaming on a tighter budget, this is a great alternative.

Rating: ★★★★☆

Tsunami EGAD

Manufacturer: Voodoo
URL: www.voodoopc.com

Processor: 1.8GHz Pentium 4
Memory: 256MB PC800 RDRAM
Hard drive(s): 2x 40.9GB IBM Deskstar, in RAID array
DVD/CD-ROM: Pioneer trayless 16x DVD/40x CD-ROM
CD-RW: none
Video: Gainward Nvidia GeForce3 64MB
Audio: Hercules Game Theater XP
Monitor: 19" (18" viewable) Samsung SyncMaster 955 DF flatscreen monitor
Speakers: Klipsch ProMedia 4.1
Extras: 1.44MB floppy drive
Windowed case, to show off crazy "Picasso" origami cable folding
White neon interior lighting
Three-year parts and labor warranty
Price as configured: $4100.00*

Voodoo's machine is downright ugly — from the front. From the side, this speed demon is a true work of art. Lit by white neon lights, the case interior is painted in one of four colors — Porsche black, Bugatti blue, Ferrari red, or Lamborghini yellow — and yes, it's actually the same exact paint used on the cars. Then, Voodoo's trained origami experts (we're not kidding) fold all the cabling out of the way. The end result is simply breathtaking. It's also blisteringly fast, edging out the Alienware in *Quake III* demo 1, and destroying all comers in *3DMark2001*. Plus, when it's time to upgrade, Voodoo handles it better than anyone. But it should be noted that the company's tech support doesn't work nights.

Rating: ★★★★★

AREA 5i

Manufacturer: Alienware
URL: www.alienware.com

Processor: 2.0GHz Pentium 4
Memory: 256MB PC800 RDRAM
Hard drive: IBM DeskStar 61.4GB
DVD/CD-ROM: Pioneer 16x DVD player
CD-RW: Plextor 24x/10x/40x
Video: Nvidia GeForce3 Nfinite-FX 64MB DDR
Audio: Creative Labs SBLive! Platinum 5.1
Monitor: 19" flatscreen NEC Multisync FE-950+ .25dp (18-inch viewable)
Speakers: Klipsch ProMedia 5.1
Extras: Custom-painted case — and everything else.
One year 24-7 onsite warranty
1.44MB floppy drive
Sidewinder Precision 2 flight stick
Sidewinder gamepad
Price as configured: $3553.00*

In addition to painting every part of its PCs one of eight eye-popping colors, Alienware incorporates new tech faster than anyone: Our rig showed up sporting a 2.0GHz Pentium 4 and a pre-release, evaluation version of Windows XP. It benchmarked through the roof, and we suspect it would have gone even faster if it had been running a more established (or even finished) OS. In fact, it has only two minor weaknesses: a single hard drive (RAID arrays, used by all the other entries, are faster) and the second-best sound card (we prefer the Hercules). Alienware has great, 24-7 tech support, too.

Rating: ★★★★★

TO TEST THE BEST

While much of our time with these machines involved logging time with hardware-intensive games like *Gionts*, *Tribes 2*, and *Mox Payne*, we also ran some more quantifiable tests. Some of the results are shown below. You'll notice they're all respectable scores — you can't go wrong with any of these rigs.

	Quake III demo 1	Quake III demo 2	3DMark 2001	SiSoft Sandra CPU test	DroneZmarK minimum fps
Hypersonic	183.5 fps	180.9 fps	6304	2168	45.7
Alienware	192.4	191.0	6351	2394	46.7
Falcon	159.1	157.1	4898	1862	33.3
Voodoo	193.1	190.0	6666	2268	33.3
HP	167.9	165.1	5727	2033	29.3

*** All prices are given as of August 13. The PC market changes almost daily as new products are introduced, so prices are surely going to be different if quoted today**

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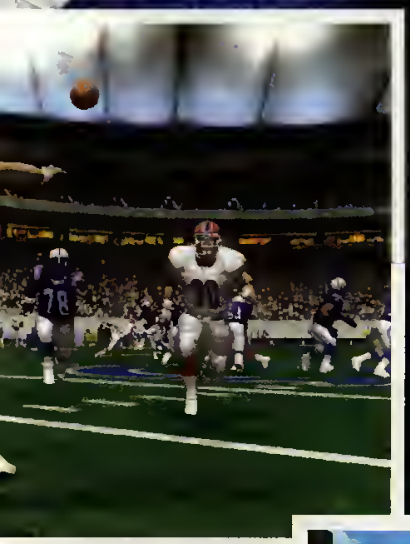

This is your day. You get up, you go to work, someone makes fun of your momma, you tear an ACL, you hear trade rumors, you go home. This isn't playing the NFL—this is playing in the NFL. The graphics, the camera angles, the intensity, the trophy case. Have a good night, Mr. Manning. See you tomorrow.

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PLAYERS

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GameCube Watch

The Legend of Zelda turns Legend of "Cel-da"

Nintendo's next-generation GameCube console is now available in Japan. A November 18 release date in the U.S. draws closer and closer. But one specially cooked company ingredient is missing from both launches — a flagship title to sell hardware units. No *Mario*. No *Zelda*. Well, at least not yet.

Cel damage?

Rewind to August and pause on Nintendo's Spaceworld 2001 event in Tokyo, Japan (see News, page 12). Here master designer Shigeru Miyamoto unveiled his next-generation versions of the *Mario* and *Zelda* franchises, both promised for 2002 debuts. Almost two minutes of realtime footage was shown for the two games combined.

Mario danced around a huge city in his traditional plumbers garb, not looking very different from Marios past. Link appeared too, but gone was the Link shown at Spaceworld a year before. Gone was the dark, gritty, realistic take on the *Zelda* franchise. In its place came a child: *Powerpuff* Link with cel-shaded "toon" graphics, a whole lot of Warner Bros.-inspired animation, and comic gags directly out of the Saturday morning cartoons.

When the new *Zelda* trailer was finished playing, something very unusual happened: The roaring applause and stand-up cheer common to major Nintendo unveilings like this was muted, the crowd seeming more puzzled than satisfied. Indeed, even Japan's Nintendo executives present after the event were overheard asking, "Why didn't the Western press cheer like it usually does?" The answer? Change. Link's transformation from ultra-slick polygonal adventurer to childish, colorform cutout was completely unexpected. And, as the saying goes, people fear change.

Bad news, good news

Though the rants overflowing the message boards on the Internet would have you believe otherwise, the *Zelda* makeover wasn't all bad. Certainly the technology was outstanding, as boy Link ran through colorful, shadowed environments with a fluidity of animation unequaled on a console. The cel shading techniques employed in the demonstration were similarly impressive, effortlessly outclassing games with comparable styles such as *Jet Grind Radio*.

Meanwhile, the play mechanics seemed to closely resemble those first pioneered with N64's *Ocarina of Time*. Link could target enemies, strafe around them, and use his sword to attack. But he could also flip over them during battle. Additionally, the tiny hero could sneak in the dark around his foes. One particular scene in the game showcased Link as he tiptoed past a guard, whose light illuminated the area only a few feet in front of him. It looked like fantastic fun and typically Miyamoto in its simplicity.

But regardless, it wasn't what gamers were expecting of Nintendo's next-generation *Zelda*. And the metamorphosis left many asking the question: Why didn't EAD instead inject this style and humor into the *Mario* franchise, for which it would have been perfectly suited?

Miyamoto explained that the change came because he didn't want the team working on the project to ever feel as if it couldn't exercise its creative freedom, and because he was personally becoming uncomfortable with the progress of the game. In the end, *Zelda* — or "*Cel*-da," if you prefer — will probably be an amazing update to a classic series. But will it be a step in the direction that gamers want, or what Nintendo wants?

NextGen

■ **Our monthly GameCube Watch columnist, Matt Casamassina, is the editor-in-chief of IGNcube.com**

WILL THE REAL LINK PLEASE STAND UP?

Nintendo revealed the new Link character at Spaceworld. Can you spot the real one?

A. Contestant #1 B. Contestant #2 C. Contestant #3 D. Contestant #4

(Answer: B. Others: A. Colorform logo man C. Hermey, the dentist-wannabe elf D. Pre-rendered Link from Spaceworld 2000)

■ **Not exactly the *Zelda* we'd expect, but the cel shading is exquisite. Why Link needs to look like a four-year-old, nobody knows**

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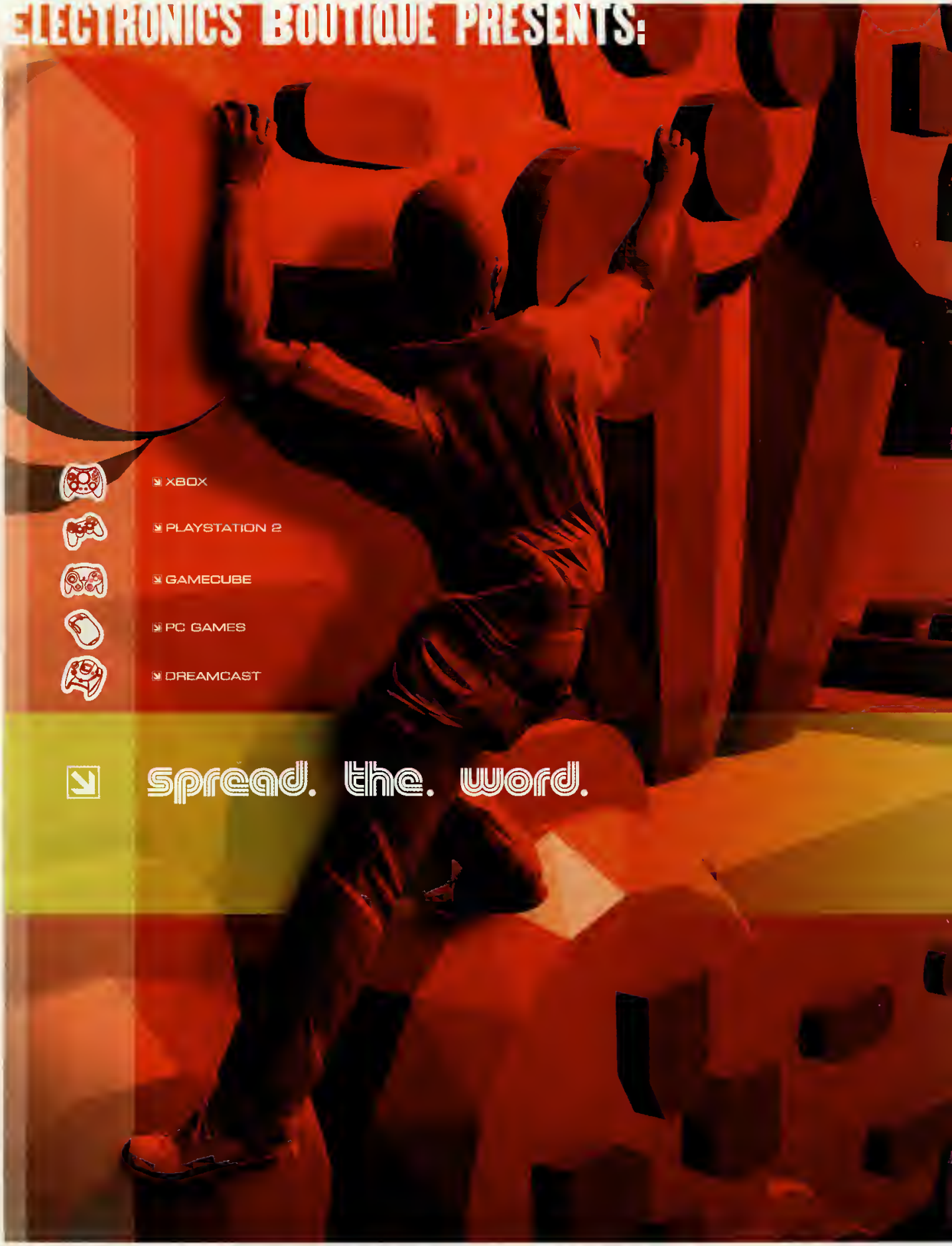
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Alphas

Next Generation's sanity-shattering previews will keep you up at night with the lights on

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Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind 60

Legends of Wrestling 60

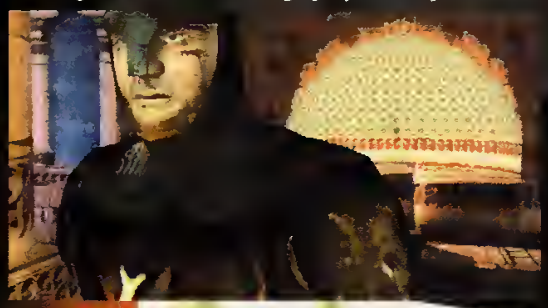
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 58

■ GAMECUBE

ETERNAL DARKNESS

■ Publisher **Nintendo** ■ Developer **Silicon Knights** ■ Release Date **December** ■ Origin **Canada**

Nintendo's take on survival horror might just make you scream



■ Alexandra Roivas (main image) is the lead character in *Eternal Darkness*, but you will also control 11 others, including Centurion Pious Augustus (above) and the Knight Joseph De Molay (below)

Part *Resident Evil* survival horror, part Lovecraftian epic, and part hack-n-slash action, *Eternal Darkness* is the antithesis of the family-friendly image Nintendo has spent almost 20 years cultivating. Surprisingly, that's exactly what the company wants. With this project, Nintendo is finally making a serious bid for the more mature gamer. And instead of depending on excessive blood or gory fatalities, the master storytellers at Silicon Knights have created a dark tale of lurking horror and fading sanity sure to appeal to gamers looking for a little more (pardon the play on words) meat in their horror gaming experience.

As with most epic tales, it starts out with a seemingly smalltime turn of events. Players initially take on the role of Alexandra (Alex) Roivas (above, staring at you), a headstrong young woman who is investigating the murder of her grandfather in the old family estate. Of course, Alex soon finds herself embroiled in a much larger conflict involving a powerful ancient race that ruled the Earth long ago, madmen that seek to restore them to power, and the heroes that have carried the burden of saving the planet before her.

It's these heroes that provide *Eternal Darkness* with its most distinctive gameplay angle. You'll not only play as Alex, but as 11 other characters from the past as well. In what has to be regarded as an extremely ambitious move, the 12 stories will actually intertwine to tell

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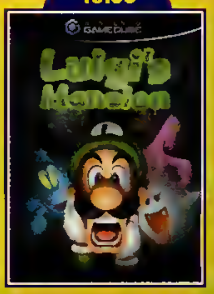

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■ The game engine can actually make 16 complete texture passes (for highlights, lighting, etc.) and still run at 60fps

■ Characters can only run for a short time before they get winded and actually start slowing down. In a combat situation, that's definitely not good

one single epic tale of evil and redemption. Aside from Alex, other playable characters include the Roman Centurion Pious Augustus from 26 BCE, Joseph De Molay, a knight Templar in the year 195, and Ellia, a dancing slave girl in 12th-century Cambodia. Choices made by the player in one time period can also affect what happens in another, so you'll (hopefully) want to go back and replay the game to see what could have been should you decide differently at a critical juncture.

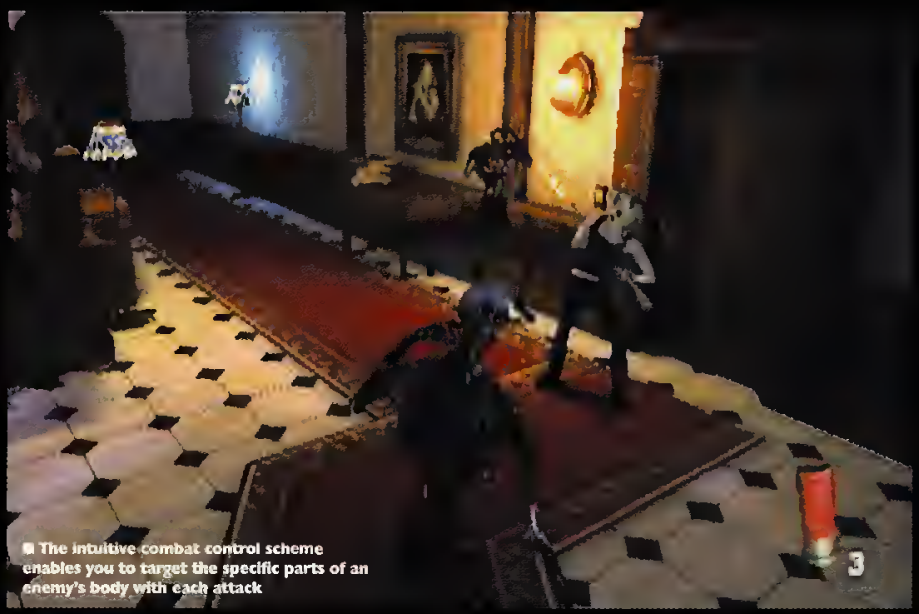
All the characters have their own complete story lines to play through and their own weapons and combat methods as well. Joseph, for example, wields a nasty mace, while Alex is privy to more modern weapons, like a shotgun. And despite the fact that each character will have his/her own attacks, the combat interface has been streamlined quite a bit; hit the right analog button and you'll target the nearest enemy. Then, depending on how you push the stick, you'll target certain body parts. Push up, for example, and you'll aim at the head, while left or right will take off an arm. A lot of the strategy in combat will be knowing which body parts are the best to lop off of which creatures. While removing arms from some may render them harmless, it will encourage other creatures to use more powerful magic attacks.

Other than the combat, the game goes out of its way quite a bit to improve on its survival horror brethren (although some of the enemies shown to **Next Gen** are dead ringers for *RE* zombies — go figure). First of all, characters are always controlled directionally — up goes up, down goes down — instead of the relative (read: quirky) *Resident Evil* control scheme. To complement these controls, Silicon Knights has also put a lot of work into creating a new camera system that can not only help enhance the mood but can do so without the annoying drawbacks of Capcom's traditional static camera system. The developer has created a fairly intelligent camera that will remain static as you explore an area of a room, but will also gently pan around any walls

Making short work of the enemies will help you keep your sanity intact.

TERROR TECH

With the help of some advance scripting and a dynamic animation system, characters in the game will react to their environments. For example, if there's a monster in the room, player characters will glare at it aggressively if they're healthy but show some apprehension if wounded. Environmental cues, like the sound of a torch popping, will put an accordingly surprised expression on a character's face. An especially elegant portrait on the wall will also demand your attention as you walk past. Players may not consciously notice these little touches, but the team feels they will add significantly to the game's immersive qualities.



■ The intuitive combat control scheme enables you to target the specific parts of an enemy's body with each attack

■ Each character has a wildly different setting. Ellia is actually a slave dancer from 12th-century Cambodia, but that doesn't mean she can't kick ass when necessary

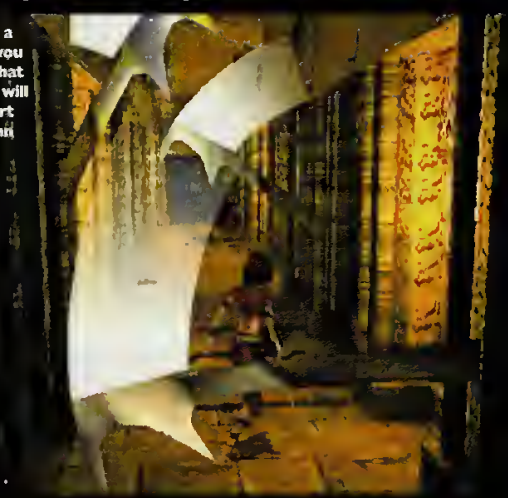
that get in your way, or look at a distance to keep a monster in view. It even goes so far as to act differently if you enter the same room with or without enemies in it. The team has really gone out of its way to eliminate those pesky reversing camera angles and monsters that attack you from offscreen.

The most innovative feature in the game is also the one that will make or break it: the Sanity System. The characters in *Eternol Dorkness* are being exposed to some seriously twisted stuff, which the designers feel is almost certain to have negative effects on their psyches. The idea is that the more you walk down this twisted psychological path without disposing of the enemies that confront you, the more your character's sanity will erode. It'll start off subtly: small hallucinations that you might just catch out of the corner of your eye, pictures watching you, or blood slowly dripping down the wall. As you lose more of your sanity, the effects are more dramatic: Your head falls off as you enter a door and then, as you pick it up, starts reciting Shakespeare. However, making short work of the enemies will help you keep your marbles intact, as you've retained your sense of power and your ability to rationalize the horrific world you've entered.

Eternol Dorkness definitely represents a new, more psychological take on a videogame genre that has long been dominated by nothing but visceral horror. As very little of the game has been shown, it's difficult to predict whether or not the team will accomplish its lofty storytelling goals and deliver something that could be considered a true system-seller. But given the quality of Silicon Knights' past projects, Nintendo could have its first winning, adult-oriented GameCube game that, we hope, could be the first of many to come. — *Bloke Fischer*

Choices made in one time period can also affect what happens in another.

■ Characters will have their own combo attacks for maximum damage in combat



■ Do you have a nice TV? If so, you should know that the final game will actually support progressive scan and 16:9 video modes

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■ The team has spent a lot of time ensuring that both the spaceflight and FPS modes work with console controllers

■ XBOX, PLAYSTATION 2

FALCONE: INTO THE MAELSTROM

■ Publisher **Virgin (UK)** ■ Developer **Point Blank** ■ Release Date **TBD** ■ Origin **UK**

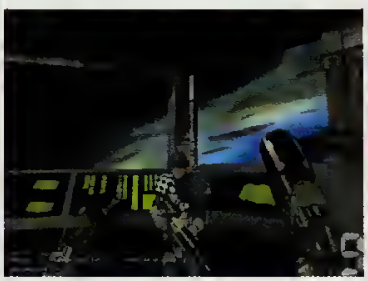
Arrgh! Space pirates be raidin' your console

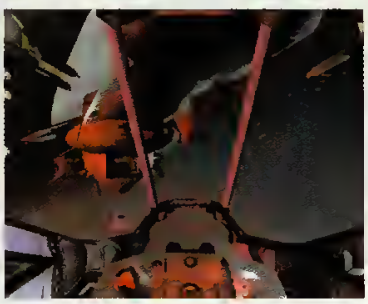
Think of pirates, and your mind is likely to conjure images of the cutlass-wielding nomads of the high seas. Point Blank's latest pirate game takes the same swashbuckling action and sets it in space, seamlessly blending together space flight and first-person action. That's right: You pilot your pirate freighter to each target, land, and then take out enemies on foot.

The concept plays like a comic book, casting the player as a "loveable" rogue. Lead Designer Damian Hosen explains: "The player plays a space pirate called Gabriel Falcone, and you've got 20 levels, each of which has different objectives. But, as a subtext to every level, because you're a space pirate, you're a thief, and you have to break aboard and steal booty too."

Despite the game's FPS roots, the team presses the point that *Falcone*, is, was, and always will be a console game. "We've always been going for a console control method," confirms Hosen. "Character styles, tempo, weapons — it's all for that sort of market. The key thing is keeping the continuity between the two sections on the pad. Because the two game modes are seamless, because there are no loading times — when you board a ship, you're in the ship — it's got to work consistently between the two."

Ultimately, success will depend on making the game look and feel like a console game instead of just another PC port. The team's got the right mindset to make it happen, but the final test is yet to come. — *Nigel Edge*





■ Since you're a pirate, the goal of many levels is to break in, steal the booty, and get out

COMIC ART

In order to give *Falcone* that comic-book appeal, Point Blank hired on artist Jim Murray (*Batman/The Demon, Judge Dredd*) as the full-time art director. In the same vein, the team is also being extremely careful to avoid the PC palette featured in many FPS titles. "The look for it is very 'console,' and that was key," offers Lead Designer Damian Hosen. "We wanted to get away from the traditional first-person palettes — the greys — and make it very colorful and vibrant."

~Shenmue II~
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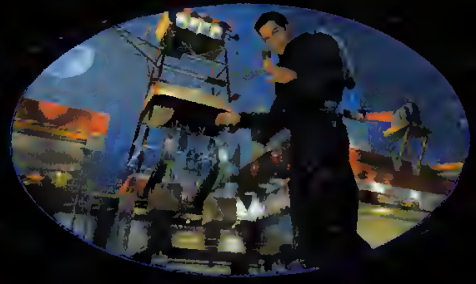

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■ PC

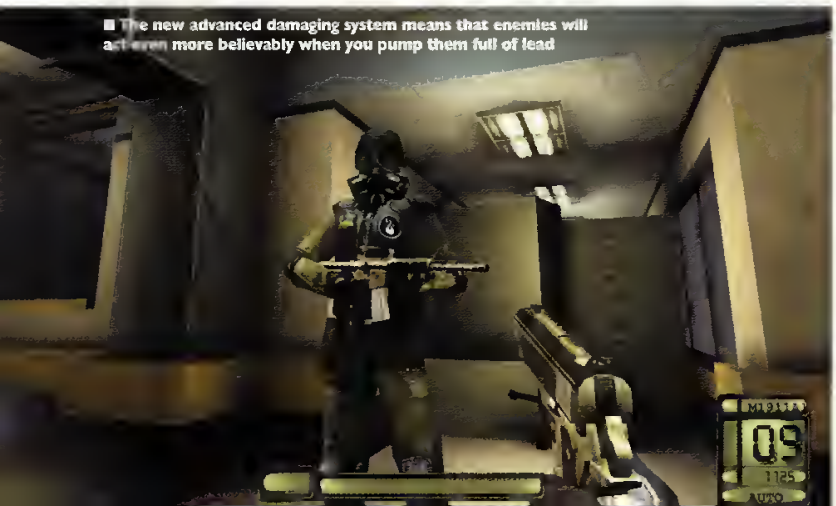
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II: DOUBLE HELIX

■ Publisher **Activision** ■ Developer **Raven Software** ■ Release Date **February 2002** ■ Origin **US**

Raven's mercenary shooter is back and (uh-oh!) gorier than ever

When Activision published *Soldier of Fortune* in mid-1999, it ruffled more than a few feathers both inside and outside the gaming industry with its unflinching portrayal of graphic violence. Not since *Kingpin* had we seen such gut-wrenching scenes of exploding heads, dismemberment, arterial spray, and convulsing body parts a-flyin' — and in fact developer Raven took things one step further with the addition of its custom-built GHOUL technology, which modified the *Quake II* engine to deliver the most realistic carnage possible.

Once all the ill-informed critics had stopped huffing and puffing about the moral outrage, however, we got down to the business of enjoying a well-designed FPS driven by the non-stop visceral action and a cool techno-thriller-style story. And in these ultra-sensitive times, when even bleeding-edge shooters like *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* and *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* are eschewing the bloodshed in pursuit of Teen ratings, you might think that the Raven boys would be dialing down the gore just a little. Think again. In fact it's going to be even gorier. "We're increasing the amount of damage zones on the characters," says Project Leader Jon Zuk. "We have more dismemberment areas and per-pixel hit accuracy on the skins. If you hit an enemy in the



■ The new advanced damaging system means that enemies will act even more believably when you pump them full of lead

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE vs. SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II

Bigger is better right? Here's an at-a-glance guide to how the sequel stacks up against the original, feature-wise.

	SOF	SOFII
LEVELS	30+	60
WEAPONS	12	20
ENGINE	Quake ii	Quake III
TEXTURES	128x128 pixels	1024x1024 pixels
POLYS PER CHARACTER	500	3000

Other SOFII features: ICARUS2 scripting system (enhanced in-game cinematics); GHOUL2 damage system (skeletal animation, enhanced hit detection, more damage zones); LICH AI programming (allows NPCs to fight in squad formation); Random Mission Generator (creates infinite maps with variable goals against AI opponents).

Alphas

■ The *Quake III* engine has enabled the team to create enemies that are eerily realistic

■ Stealth and cunning will be emphasized as opposed to just coming in blasting

forearm, a bullet hole appears on the forearm. While we're aware of the climate that exists about game violence, we simply forge ahead. We make no bones about it that this is a Mature-rated title and thus should only be played by people over 17."

As in the original, *Soldier of Fortune II* casts you as real-life mercenary John Mullins (who is again on board as a technical advisor for the team) in a story line driven by sinister biowarfare experiments. The single-player game spans over 60 levels, with 20 real-world weapons, and Zuk says that this time out the gameplay will have a greater emphasis on stealth and cunning than what he describes as the "straight run-and-gun action" of the first game. That's one of many nods toward more realistic action, as the designers seek to incorporate realism while keeping the game entertaining. "We looked at a lot of the feedback from the users, and one of the things that kept coming up was, 'Make it more realistic,'" explains Zuk. "We have done some of that while staying true to the first game and the entertainment value of 'reality.' We can be 'realistic,' but only to a degree. The designers always have to take liberties to create an exciting situation to put the player in. So we create realistic interpretations of weapons, like the M4 and the Micro Uzi. We create more accurate hit locations and AI so that the enemies feel as if they're real people. I think that when people say they want reality, this is what they're asking for. They just don't know how to ask for it."

With such high-profile projects as *Jedi Knight II: Outcast* and *Quake IV* also currently in production at Raven's studio, it's clear that these guys have now joined id and Epic on the genre's A-list. As *Soldier of Fortune II* moves into its Alpha stage, it further cements that position. — *Gary Whitta*

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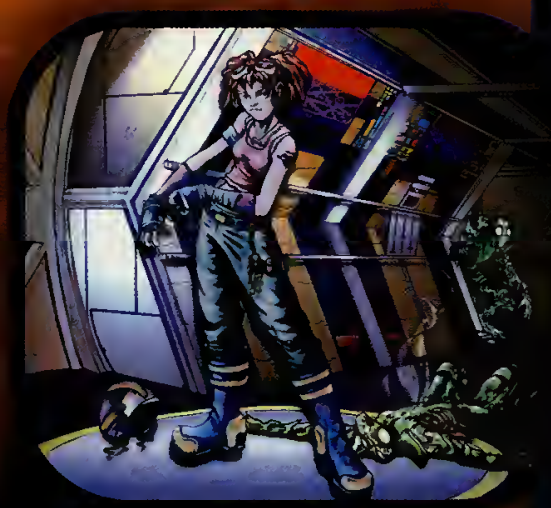

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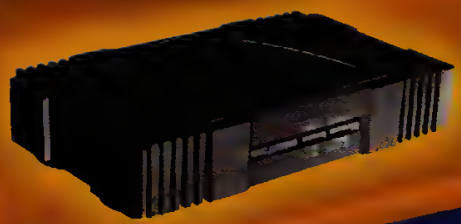

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■ Multiple enemies will attack at once, so you'll have to be careful not to get surrounded

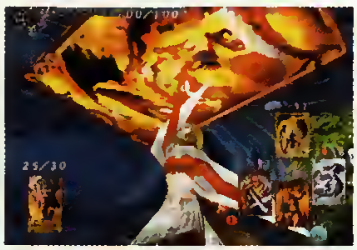
■ GAMECUBE

RUNE

■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Developer: **From Software** ■ Release Date: **Winter** ■ Origin: **Japan**

GC's first RPG combines traditional gameplay with the luck of the draw

With the continued popularity of collectable card games like *Magic: The Gathering*, it's no surprise that game developers are taking cues from the school of collectable card game design. *Rune*, From Software's latest RPG, is a shining example. While it features many traditional RPG elements, the main focus of the game appears to be the card-based combat system itself.



■ Many of the spells you can use have spectacular effects, but beware — just because it looks good doesn't mean it will be effective

On the surface, the game resembles most RPGs. You play as Katia Jerber, a young girl who is capable of great magic powers. Her mission isn't clear yet, but as she explores the huge 3D world where she lives, she finds, predictably, that she must constantly fight the wandering monsters she encounters.

And it's when she runs into enemies that things get interesting. As players use cards in lieu of spells to fight in the realtime battles, your job is to assemble a "deck" of 30 of these cards (out of around 100) before you venture forth, using them to take out anything in your path. Much like in traditional collectable card games, success will depend on how the deck is put together since you'll only be able to select from four spells at a time — which are, of course, chosen at random for you. Although enemies don't actually use spell cards to fight back, you do have to be careful with them, as their arsenal includes typical monster attacks such as slashing, breathing fire, and stomping you at will.

Based on the little we saw at Spaceworld (see News, page 12), *Rune* looked like fun. Now we're hoping the team manages to tie a compelling plot into the mix. We're still not sure if it will see the light of day in the U.S., but with the popularity of CCGs and RPGs here, we're betting that it's in the cards.

— *Bloke Fischer/Christophe Kogotoni*

■ Players choose from four spells at any given time

I'M GONNA DECK YOU SUCKA

Card battling isn't anything new in U.S. video gaming. Both *Final Fantasy VIII* and *IX* featured card-battling mini-games that were integrated into the story line, while *Pokémon Card Battle* on GBC featured such fights as the main source of combat — much like *Rune*, only turn-based. The closest game to *Rune* so far, however, was *Magic: The Gathering Battlemage* on PSX (though that game was so horrible that we've actually spent the last couple years trying to block out the memory of its existence).

■ *Moto GP2*'s tracks are based around real-life ones, which means the scenery may not be as exciting as in, say, *Ridge Racer*

■ PLAYSTATION 2

MOTO GP2

■ Publisher: **Namco** ■ Developer: **Namco** ■ Release Date: **2002** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Namco's fastest racer isn't what you think

Moto GP was the runt of the PS2 launch litter. Hidden among the high-profile releases of *Tekken Tag Battle* and *Ridge Racer V*, the motorcycle racing game didn't stand much chance of being noticed among the already crowded PS2 U.S. launch lineup. And (surprise, surprise) it wasn't.

Since timing was the worst problem Namco faced, it's little surprise that the sequel isn't going to be all that different. The biggest improvement is in the graphics, which have benefited from a nice second-generation PS2 graphical boost. In particular, the bikes themselves are much more detailed than in the previous game. You can really see the difference in the replay modes, which look nearly photorealistic.

Of course, as any racing fan these days knows, the replay modes are worth squat if the game doesn't play well. Not much is changing in this department either. The game will still be a mesh of sim and arcade racing that emphasizes speed over strict realism. As with most sequels, there is also a lot more content in this game than in the original. Five new tracks have been added to the five in the first game including the Hollanda GP and the Spain GP. The 20 riders in the game are also modeled after the real-life racers in the 2001 Championships.

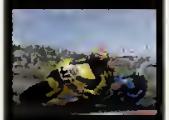
The question remains as to whether timing was really the biggest hurdle the series faced in its quest for market acceptance. Motorcycle racing games have always been niche, and, no matter how nice this game looks, it may not be the kind of racing experience that the masses are waiting for.

— Bloke Fischer/Christophe Kagotoni

THE BATTLE OF THE REPLAYS

Ever since *Gran Turismo*, developers have spent an inordinate amount of time trying to make their replays look astounding (time, we'd argue, that could be better spent on the game itself). The current champion is *Gran Turismo 3*, but *Moto GP2* has some nice replays too. Compare:

■ *Gran Turismo 3*



■ *Moto GP2*

■ Motorcycle racing is actually much more challenging than auto racing because you can't really just powerslide around a sharp turn

PlayStation 2

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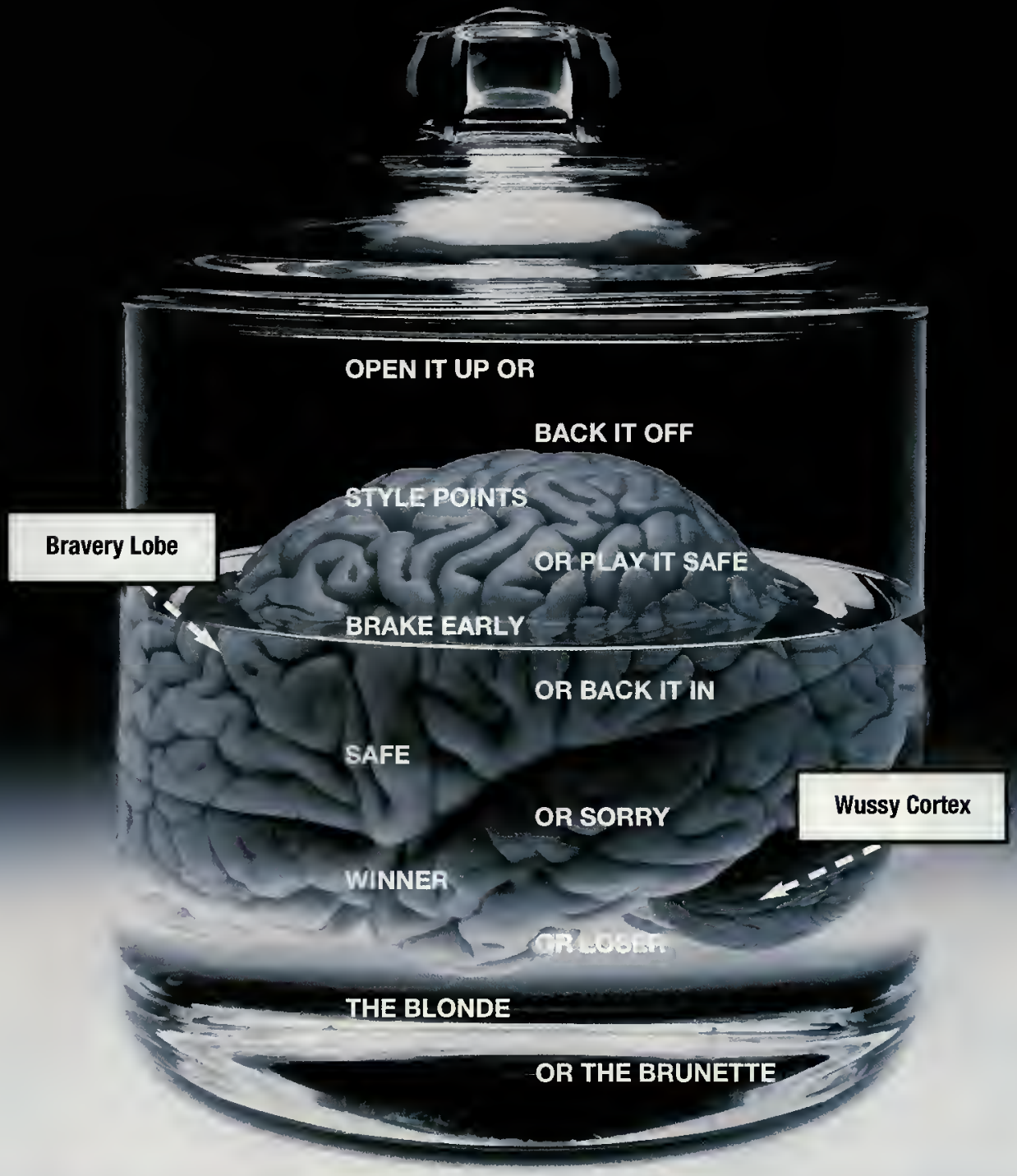

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Milestones

■ During combat, the camera can swoop closer, giving you an unobscured view

■ Even with Kain's power, multiple enemies can pose a serious challenge

■ XBOX, PLAYSTATION 2

BLOOD OMEN 2

■ Publisher: **Eidos** ■ Developer: **Crystal Dynamics**
■ Release Date: **November (PS2), TBA (Xbox)** ■ Origin: **US**

Hot on the heels of Crystal's long-delayed *Soul Reaver 2* comes this title, which we're actually much more excited about. First seen back in **NG 03/01**, Kain's array of arcane special powers, which range from mind control to stealthily punching an enemy's heart clean out of his chest, is the stuff our dreams are made of.

■ Take a good look at this screen, and just try to tell us you don't want to play this game

■ All the established multiplayer modes are here, including graffiti and trick attack. But now, you can play online

■ GAMECUBE, XBOX, PLAYSTATION 2, PLAYSTATION, PC

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

■ Publisher: **Activision** ■ Developer: **Neversoft** ■ Release Date: **November (GC, PS2, PSX), Q1 (Xbox, PC)** ■ Origin: **US**

We've seen the Hawk's latest guaranteed zillion-seller before, but now we've had a chance to try out online play, and it rocks. You'll need some sort of USB-capable Internet connection — we used a network-to-USB adapter — to play online, but it's well worth the investment

■ PLAYSTATION 2

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE

■ Publisher: **Interplay** ■ Developer: **Snowblind Studios**
■ Release Date: **November** ■ Origin: **US**

Interplay's "*Diablo's Gate*" 3D action RPG recently arrived in our offices in demo form, and it has us pretty hooked. Gameplay is just streamlined enough to pick up in seconds, while plenty of items, weapons, and the like will keep you busy. And the engine looks great.

■ Developer Snowblind is clearly in command of the PS2 hardware — the engine, especially the lighting, is top-notch

wounds will
heal...

Milestones

■ XBOX, PC

THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

■ Publisher: **Bethesda** ■ Developer: **Bethesda**
■ Release Date: **December** ■ Origin: **US**

This ambitious "go anywhere, do anything" RPG has been a long time coming, but it should be worth the wait. The big draws are the open-ended gameplay, a huge "living" world, and the user-friendly scenario editor, which Bethesda hopes will facilitate a steady flow of *Half-Life*-style, player-created content.

■ The game was originally PC-only, but the Xbox version (shown here) looks every bit as lush

■ PLAYSTATION 2, GAMECUBE

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING

■ Publisher: **Acclaim** ■ Developer: **Acclaim**
■ Release Date: **November** ■ Origin: **US**

The Rock, Triple H, and The Undertaker — none of them compare to the likes of Kamala the Giant, Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka, and Jake "The Snake" Roberts. Acclaim's wrestling history is dismal (*ECW: Anarchy Rulz!*, *WWF Attitude*), but this is an all-new team with something to prove.

■ The game features over 30 classic wrestlers and 12 types of match, including Ladder, Barbed-Wire, and Eight-Man Elimination

■ PLAYSTATION 2

DYNASTY WARRIORS 3

■ Publisher: **Koei** ■ Developer: **Koei**
■ Release Date: **November** ■ Origin: **Japan**

Despite its repetitive nature, Koei's *Dynasty Warriors 2* was one of our favorite PS2 launch titles, and this new entry looks even better. It's larger, with 40 playable characters (each with new moves) and 20 stages. More importantly, the game now has two-player splitscreen play, in both co-op and versus varieties. Plus, you can now ride elephants.

■ One of the new characters is Zhang He, known for both his grace in battle and his merciless treatment of his enemies

■ Two players can now play splitscreen, either cooperating as friends or clashing as foes

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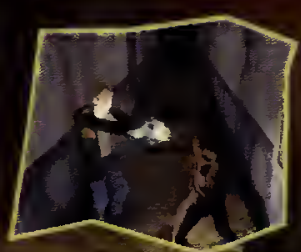
mind

will be

scarred forever.

SILENT HILL 2



MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence
Blood and Gore

PlayStation 2

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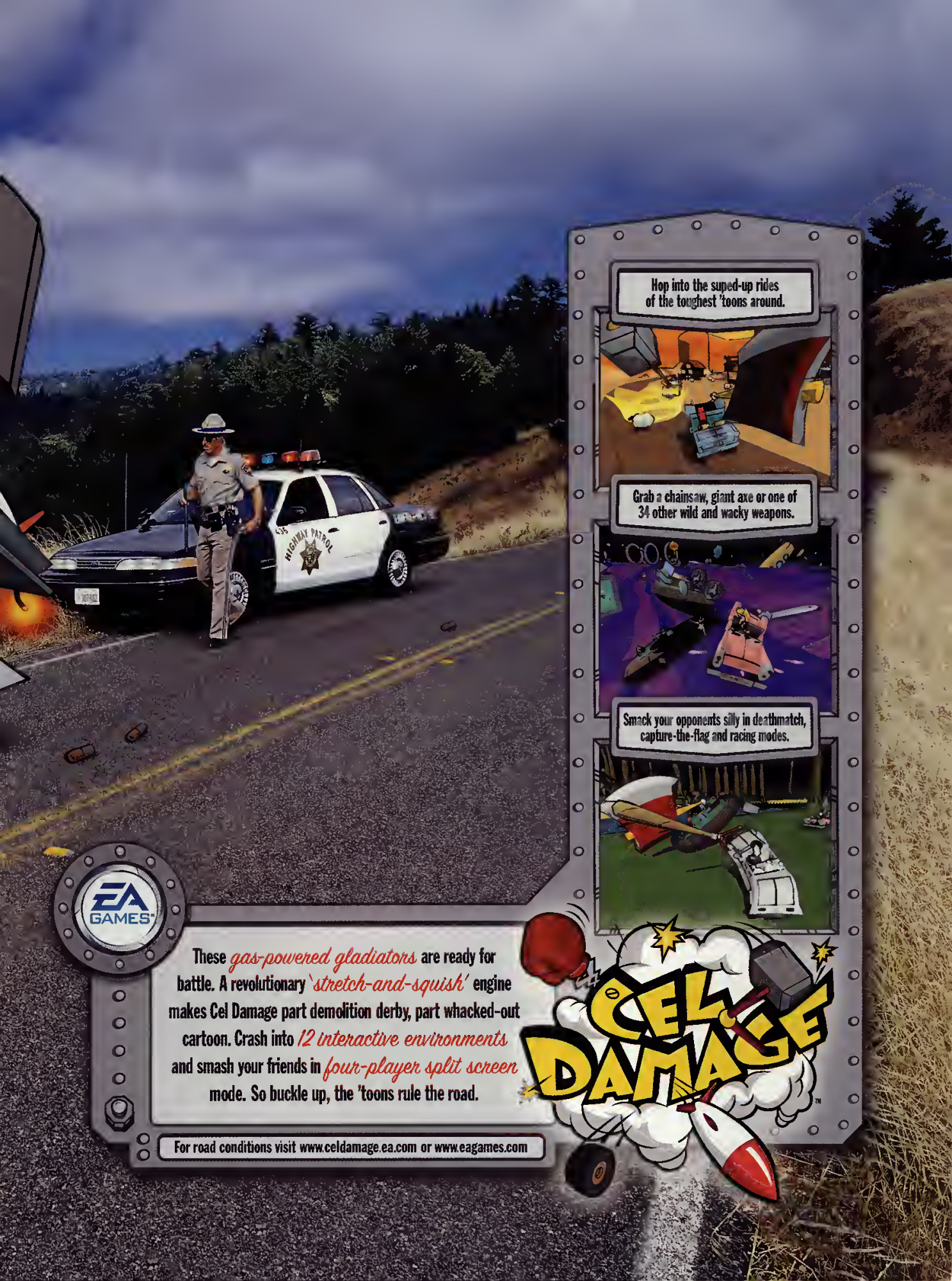
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Microsoft

Maximo

Capcom's U.S. development house proves you can bring classic 16-bit action to the 3D world of PlayStation 2

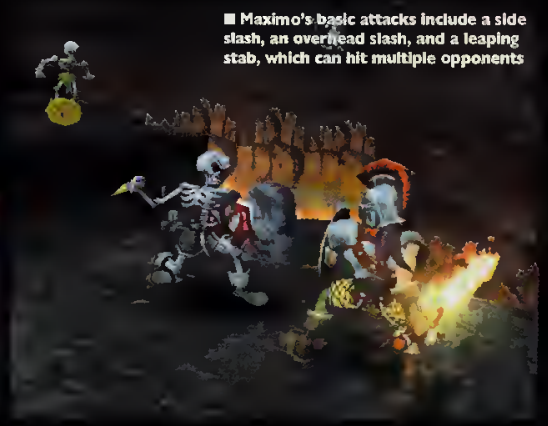
In today's increasingly complex world, racing games tout 200-plus cars with exchangeable parts, RPGs feature open-ended, "be anything" character classes, and adventure games boast epic, Hollywood-created plots and cinematic presentation. Developers get so busy "feature-chasing" competing products, they can forget the fundamentals of good game design. Luckily, Capcom Digital's Director of R&D David Siller remembers.

"My favorite coin-op game of all time is *Ghosts 'n Goblins*," proclaims Siller, whose credits range from level design on *Rygar* to the role of producer on *Crash Bandicoot*. "Classic gameplay design doesn't go out of style.... We wanted to re-create the whole thing, but with little tributes to the original games." Surprisingly, Capcom of Japan agreed, thanks largely to legendary Director of R&D Yoshiki Okamoto, who not only helped allocate funding for the project, but also brought beloved artist Susumu Matsushita on board to help visualize the game's Disney-meets-anime character designs.

In light of Siller's love of the old school, perhaps it will come as little surprise that *Maximo*'s most appealing trait is its ability to trigger an overwhelming sense of unabashed,

STORYBOOK ROMANCE

In case you missed last month's preview of *Maximo*, here's a quick story primer. Maximo is a king, who, while off at war, had his kingdom usurped by the evil Achille. Aside from stealing the throne, Achille has married Maximo's love and imprisoned his advisors (four sorceresses) in towers strewn throughout the kingdom. Achille even murders Maximo upon his return from the war. Fortunately for our hero, Death itself is pissed at Achille, whose power is derived from "spirit," which Achille releases from the underworld using a giant drill — effectively stealing spirit from Death. Thus, the Grim Reaper sends Maximo back to the land of the living to avenge himself upon Achille. The story also lends itself to a very natural continue system: The more spirit you return to Death, the more he'll reward you with additional lives.



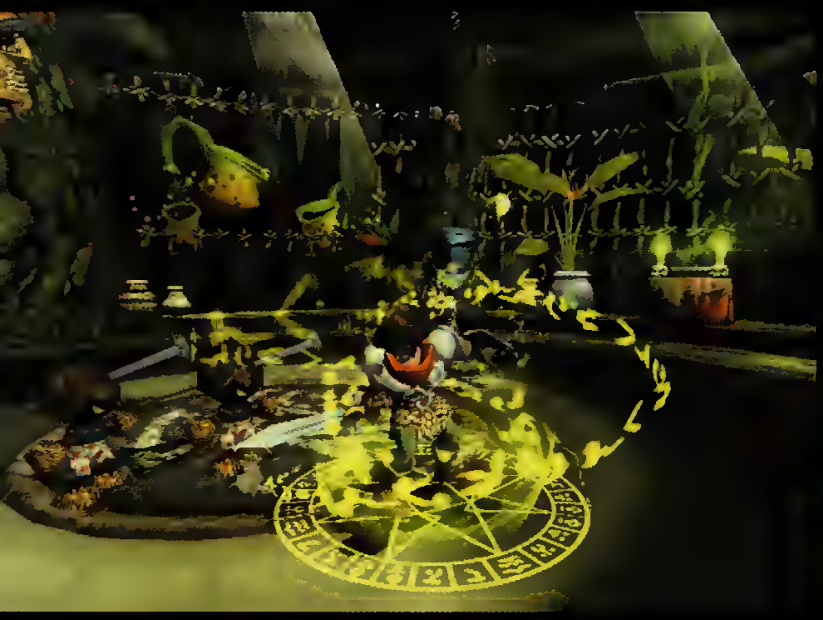
■ Maximo's basic attacks include a side slash, an overhead slash, and a leaping stab, which can hit multiple opponents

■ The gameplay may be old-school, but this engine is purely next-gen. Check out the reflections on Maximo's golden armor, and his flaming sword's particle effects

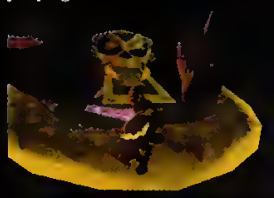
innocent excitement and enthusiasm. Much like the work of Shigeru Miyamoto or the classics to which it is a tribute, the game seems to know it's a game. Not a hyper-realistic simulation, not a plot-heavy, cinematic "experience" — just a game, expertly crafted from the very beginning to be two things: interactive and entertaining. Siller confirms this. "I wanted to make the ultimate 3D action game," he says. "A beautiful game, a game with great technology, a game that we [the design team] wanted to play. This is the result of that."

What an awesome result it is. On paper, *Maximo* looks fairly textbook: medieval setting, 30 levels across five worlds — a cemetery known as "The Boneyard," a swamp dubbed "The Great Dank," a frozen "Graveyard of Ships," a fiery underworld called "The Realm of Spirits," and Maximo's own siege-torn castle. Gameplay blends combat and platform jumping, with the player slaying enemies, fighting bosses, and collecting coins, spirit (see sidebar, page 67), and some 50 different power-ups. Typical, right?

Not exactly. For one, it's immediately obvious that every facet of *Maximo* is deliberately designed to be entertaining, even for the casual observer. Matsushita's character designs simply overflow with, for lack of a better term, character — with cartoon-like animations that only add to each of their personalities. The music recalls the campy, too-fun-to-be-spooky music often played in carnival haunted houses, and the camera favors a dramatic, slightly off-kilter angle, just like in a classic horror movie. And we do mean "just" like a movie; "Creepy Cam" was inspired by Sam Raimi's film *Army of Darkness*. Siller also gives tremendous credit to the classic amusement park "dark rides," a term used to describe pathed fun houses like the Disney amusement parks' Pirates of the Caribbean and Haunted Mansion. They inspired the ever-twisting level layouts, which subtly



■ What better way to complement finely tuned combat than with finely tuned platform jumping? (below)



YOU SPELLED IT WRONG

The original Japanese name for *Ghosts 'n Goblins* was *Makoi-Mura*, which, literally translated, means "Demon World Village." *Ooi Makoi-Mura* — the name for *Ghouls 'n Ghosts* — means "Great Demon World Village."

channel the path of the free-roaming Maximo and simultaneously generate heightened suspense by yielding plenty of corners around which to hide spooky surprises. Ironically, despite these varied influences, Siller's team has not looked to any existing 3D videogames for inspiration. They just aren't as much fun to watch.

Finally, we get our hands on a controller. Two minutes later, we're completely hooked, leaping around a haunted graveyard, hoarding coins, grabbing firefly-like bits of spirit, and slashing away at every ghost, skeleton, and zombie we can find — all this despite the fact that our armor has taken some hits and we are now wreaking righteous vengeance upon evil while clad only in boxer shorts emblazoned with big, red hearts. Whatever "it" is, *Maximo* has got it. It's as instantly addictive a game as we've played in ages, hearkening back to the days of Capcom's classic 16-bit side scrollers like *Ghouls 'n Ghosts*, when a game could be learned on a single quarter, but took weeks of allowance money to master. Yes, these are indeed textbook features — but culled from a much older, more fundamental book.

"The devil is in the details," proclaims Lead Designer Scott Rogers, which explains why Maximo's sword clangs noisily off of stone, but embeds itself in a tree trunk with a dull thunk. This is just one tiny example of how organic, how well planned-out Maximo's world is. Every interaction has been considered. Having trouble in the ice world? Try to find a flaming sword power-up. Do you need to get past the swamp zombie without him spitting piranhas at you? Use the ice sword so he freezes solid. In fact, two things become increasingly apparent as you play the game: No matter how tough, every enemy has a weakness, and certain weapons, power-ups, and attacks are much better suited to exploit that weakness than others. The sword skeletons are tough, but they're also show-offs. After attacking, they'll twirl their swords with a flourish, leaving them open for attack. Use your second-strike attack, and if their shield blocks your first strike, your second will connect, sending them clattering to the ground. And if your 16-bit alarm is going off, you're absolutely right. In fact, nowhere is the game's old-school idolatry more evident than in the boss battles.

"The big guy versus the little guy has always been kind of a tradition," Rogers explains. "It's fun." Thus, just as in the classics, the bosses in *Maximo* are enormous, easily four times taller than the hero, and each possessing a wide range of devastating attacks. But, true to form, every boss has a weak point, which you can determine

(continued on page 72)

■ As with Arthur (of *Ghosts 'n Goblins* fame) before him, Maximo's sensitive side shows through in his impeccable taste in underwear

"I wanted to make the ultimate 3D action game. A beautiful game, a game with great technology, a game that we [the design team] wanted to play. This is the result of that."

— David Siller, Director of R&D, Capcom Digital Studios

■ The unusual Realm of Spirits is filled with oddities like pig demons wielding giant hammers and enormous bear traps. (You can just barely see one off in the distance)

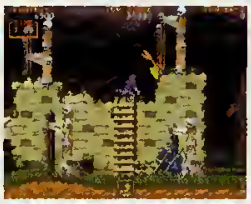
A TIMELINE OF MAXIMO'S INFLUENCES...

While many elements of *Maximo* can be found in several games, here's a quick look at some of the most likely sources of inspiration, including the original *Ghosts 'n Goblins*.

■ Ghosts 'n Goblins - 1985

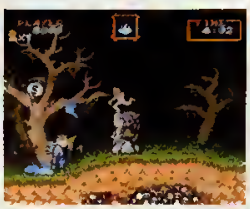
■ Trojan - 1986

■ Black Tiger - 1987



■ Ghouls 'n Ghosts - 1988

■ Magic Sword - 1990



■ Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts - 1991

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Cover Story

■ Every enemy comes in several unique sub-types. For example, skeletons with gold-trimmed shields can burrow through the ground

(cantinued from page 69)

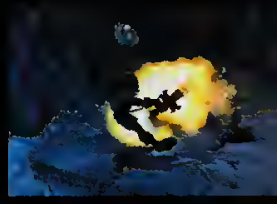
by carefully examining the boss and his environment. Ghastly Gus is a gravedigger boss whose toes stick out of his boots, so the way to defeat him begins with a hit on each of his feet. Defeating Captain Cadaver, the pirate who attacks with a giant anchor (shown below), requires a completely different technique.

This dual emphasis on fundamental gameplay and attention to detail has made the game eminently playable. It also seems to have given the game a distinctly Japanese feel (helped along by Matsushita's character designs). This comparison causes the humble Siller, who learned his trade working for Japanese developers such as Nichibutsu (creator of classics *Crazy Climber* and *Moon Cresto*) to first agree, then blush with pride.

"That's the ultimate compliment," he says. "The Japanese make the best videogames. They are the most thorough. They are very detail-oriented. They think of everything."

We'd argue that Siller has thought of everything, too. *Moximo* isn't due until January (December in Japan), but we played all five worlds, including every boss but the final — one would assume that will be Achille, but the form he'll take is anybody's guess — with fully populated levels, and near-final assets. This leaves the team months to spend balancing, tweaking, and buffing the levels to a perfect shine. When completed, *Moximo* will serve as a reminder to studios chasing *Metal Gear* and *Resident Evil* that an incredible gameplay experience doesn't necessarily mean hours of dialogue and beautifully motion-captured cut scenes. But you do need comprehensive design and a disciplined staff to execute it. In the end, the Japanese may make the best games, but now there's at least one more American studio running very close behind. — *Eric Bratcher*

■ Powering up your moves is crucial. The regular downstrike can become this devastating attack, Ring of Pain (above)



FINAL FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS

Few could have predicted *Moximo*'s quality based upon the success of Capcom Digital's previous work: a Saturn port of the arcade title *Final Fight Revenge*, released only in Japan. While the game didn't garner much acclaim, Siller refuses to consider it a failure; Capcom Digital's performance in executing the project earned the studio the respect of Capcom Japan and the right to work on a project of its choosing. That project, of course, was *Moximo*.

■ Captain Cadaver is the ghostly commander of the frozen Graveyard of Ships. His arena is underwater, where fish and even killer whales can sometimes be seen swimming past

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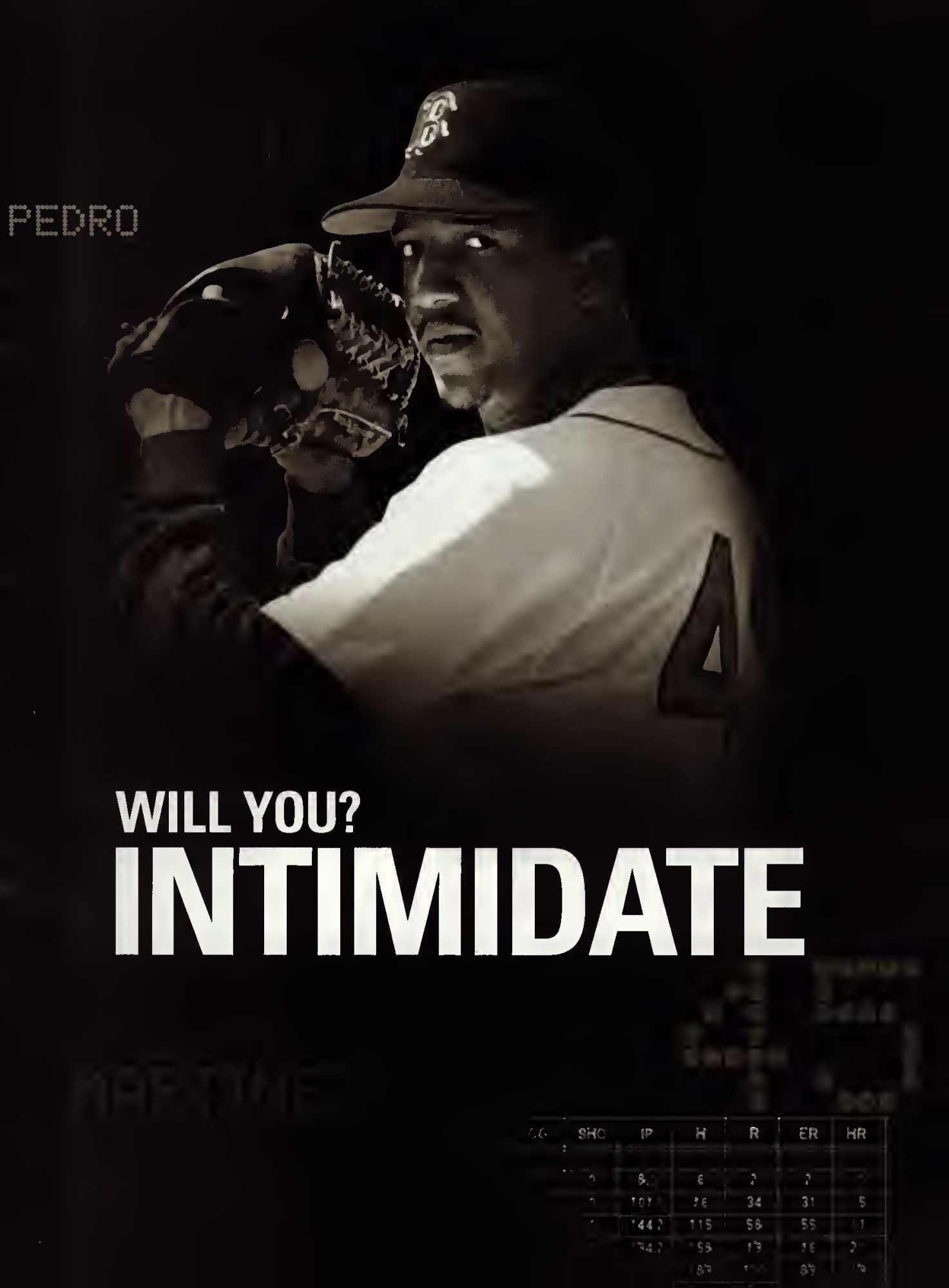
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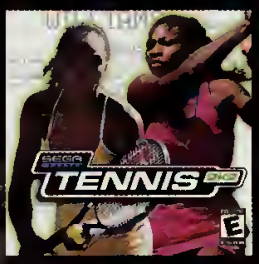

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XBOX

XBOX ARRIVES

Two years after **Next Gen** broke the Xbox story wide-open (**NG 58**), it's finally ready for launch. Has the company better known for its office products successfully made the jump to the complex console market? Find out in our comprehensive launch guide to the system and its games . . .

XBOX RATING THE SYSTEM

You've heard the hype. Now read the uncensored truth as Next Gen analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of Microsoft's entry into the console war

HARDWARE POWER

If there's one area where Xbox clearly shines, it's in this category, by *any* measure you'd care to apply. It pushes more polygons, can handle larger and more textures has better sound (supporting Dolby Digital 5.1), has more memory (which it can access faster), has a higher storage capacity, and can output a better-quality picture than any other console ever devised. Further its architecture is relatively straight forward and based on design paradigms that are familiar to most (and probably all) developers. Better yet, Xbox can do all this right out of the box, with no extra hardware required (DVD playback aside). Indeed, if the worst criticism you can level at the hardware is that the controller is somewhat large and clunky, that seems a small (although not insignificant) misstep.

NextGen ★★★★★

CURRENT SOFTWARE LIBRARY

While we've been somewhat pessimistic about the launch lineup for the last few months, now that we've actually had a chance to play most of the games — however briefly — we are pleasantly surprised to find that most are, at the very least, solid and enjoyable. There are certainly a fair number of different titles available within the first month or so, and Microsoft has done a good job in covering all genres and basically delivering something for everyone. The main problem is that, besides *DOA3* and possibly *Halo*, there's still a notable lack of any single killer app, and few franchise entries that would really make anyone look twice. Many Xbox games are available on other platforms — hardly a compelling reason to take a chance on this newcomer — and the exclusive titles are primarily original games that lack a proven track record to attract gamers.

NextGen ★★★☆☆

FUTURE SOFTWARE PROGNOSIS

Considering the sheer power under Xbox's hood, games should graphically improve by leaps and bounds over first-generation games. Plus, its Incubator Program aims to encourage indie development, so Xbox has the potential to garner the innovative ideas that fly outside corporate walls. The big question is whether Xbox can attract the top-tier properties that have yet to be secured.

NextGen ★★★½☆

MARKETING MUSCLE

As of press time, Microsoft had yet to publicly reveal Xbox's marketing campaign. But the company recently shared that a national television campaign will soon debut, and will thankfully highlight the system's games (unlike the confusing "PlayStation 9" commercials from Sony). The company is also unrolling 10,000 demo kiosks to give gamers a hands-on experience

NextGen ★★★☆☆

BOTTOM LINE

Xbox, at launch, is neither a flop nor a runaway success. Many games from its initial roster are fun, but despite the system's incredible technical capacity, very little of that power is on view yet. The question remains, how much support can Microsoft draw for the future, and will the games feature a compelling experience to back up fancy graphics? Though Microsoft has a massive uphill battle, no one else on the planet has its resources, and no company has come as far and as fast as it has up to now. However, even if Xbox winds up squarely in second place (or even, at worst, third), it has the backing to be in the race for the long run.

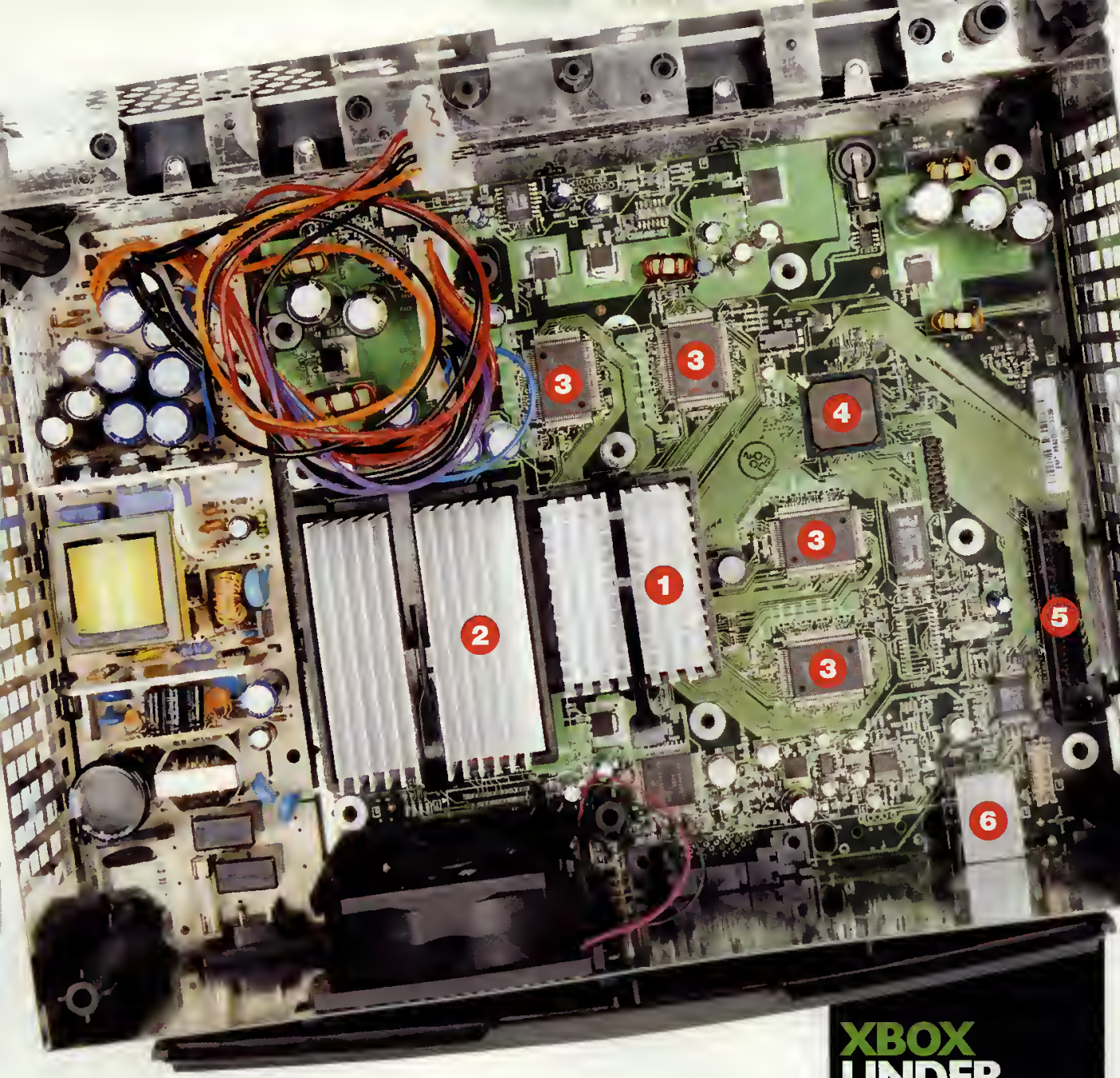
NextGen ★★★½☆

XBOX BEST LAUNCH GAME

Dead or Alive 3

Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Team Ninja

■ Without question, *DOA3* is the launch title we are most eagerly anticipating. An elaborate, dynamic combat system melds with incredibly lifelike (though rather fantastically endowed) characters to create the most realistic and artistic fighting game home consoles have ever seen.



XBOX TECH SPECS

CPU: Intel PIII 733MHz
Graphics Processor: 250MHz NV2x Nvidia GPU
RAM: 64MB 200MHz unified DDR memory
Memory Bandwidth: 6.4GB/sec
Polygons/sec: 100 million textured/lit
Audio: Nvidia media processor capable of 256 simultaneous voices (stereo) or 64 voices (3D sound-enabled)
Storage: 5x DVD-ROM Drive — 4.7GB DVDs, 10GB hard disk, 8MB memory cards
Connectivity: Built in 100Mb Ethernet port for LAN/Internet hookup
Extras: DVD remote control adds DVD playback; high-definition TV pack enables resolutions as high as 1920x1080 via HDTV
What does it mean? Xbox really is an incredible polygon-pushing machine thanks to its Nvidia chipset and fast CPU. Currently this system has more brute force than anything else. The 64MB of unified RAM and awesome sound hardware really round out the package.

XBOX UNDER THE HOOD

1. 250MHz Nvidia NV2x graphics processor
2. 733MHz Pentium III
3. 64MB of unified DDR memory
4. Nvidia media communications processor
5. IDE connector for hard drive and DVD-ROM
6. 100Mb Ethernet port

(Xbox Launch Special continued on page 86)

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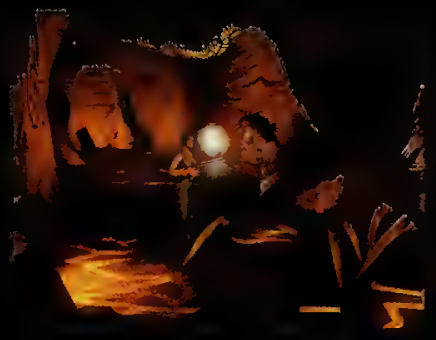

Diabolical forces will stop at nothing to destroy you

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PlayStation

INFOGRAMES

Dreamcast™

Screenshots are from Dreamcast game.

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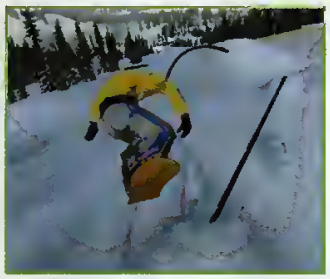
(continued from page 83)

XBOX LAUNCH GAMES

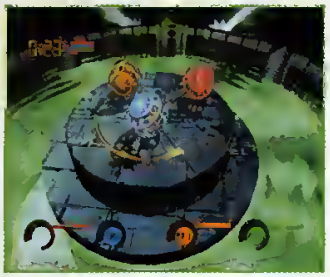
Here are the 16 games that should be in stores when Xbox launches on November 8. Of course, launch lineups are difficult to predict and may well change, but Next Gen's A to Z game guide will give you a good idea of what you can expect to play on Day 1.



AMPED

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Microsoft

The least impressive of Microsoft's launch titles, *Amped* is yet another freestyle snowboarding game. There's no race element in this game; it's more akin to *Tony Howk's Pro Skater* than *1080° Snowboarding*. If you like *Tony Howk*-style games, buy *Tony Howk*.



FUZION FRENZY

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Blitz Games

Despite looking like a kid's title, this party game offers so much variety — over 40 mini-games — that it maintains a high level of excitement without becoming tedious. Be warned: Playing *Fuzion Frenzy* by yourself sucks, but with three friends it's worth picking up.

MADDEN NFL 2002

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Electronic Arts

It's Modden. That pretty much sums up what you'll get with this title — good football gameplay and good graphics. But make sure you don't expect anything more out of *Madden NFL 2002* than an incremental difference over the PS2 version.

MAD DASH RACING

Publisher: Eidos Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Although *Mod Dosh* may try a little too hard to establish recognizable mascots, the game's frenetic pace and pick-up-and-play feel, coupled with a complex level design, make this ground-bound racing title playable by casual and hardcore gamers alike.

MICROSOFT'S XBOX DVD REMOTE AND HDTV ADAPTER

If you'd rather just watch — do it right

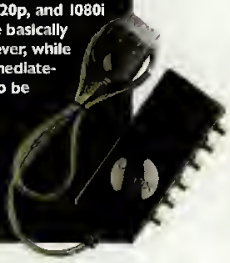
DVD REMOTE

While PS2 was able to play DVDs right out of the box, in order to do the same on your Xbox, you'll need to purchase Microsoft's DVD Movie Playback Kit, which consists of a wireless remote control and its receiver. So what exactly makes it a "kit"?

Microsoft DVD Movie Playback Kit
M.S.R.P.: $29.99

HDTV

Both Xbox and GameCube have promised support for this highest-of-the-high-tech display format, and Microsoft's unit will enable support for 480p, 720p, and 1080i signals (those numbers are basically vertical resolutions). However, while DVD video will benefit immediately, HDTV output will have to be supported by each game individually, just like the Dreamcast's VGA box.

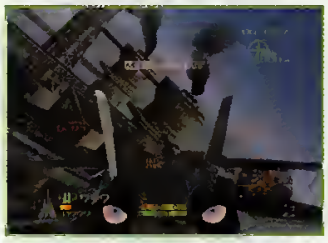


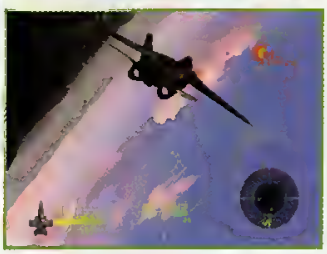
Microsoft Xbox High Definition AV Pack
M.S.R.P.: $19.99

AIR FORCE DELTA 2

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami

The action isn't quite as fast and furious as *Afterburner* and its ilk, but the game's fighter-to-fighter and fighter-to-ground battles are strangely satisfying with lots of explosions and missiles flying everywhere.

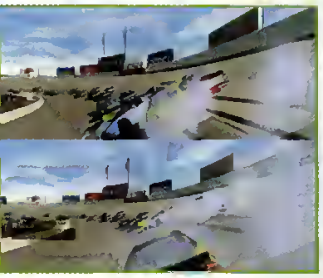




HALO

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Bungie

■ *Halo* is turning out to be as impressive as **Next Gen** first thought it would, despite a lukewarm showing at E3. Graphically, it's a beautiful game, but this FPS now has the substance to be more than a showcase for lighting and reflective surface effects. Count on *Halo* to be the "big deal" game on launch day.



NASCAR HEAT

Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Monster Games

■ NASCAR fans will go nuts over this game. The cars look great, and the difficulty level can be adjusted so players don't need intimate knowledge of physics to make decent time around the track. Expect more of what Monster Games did on the PS2 version.

NFL FEVER 2002

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Microsoft

■ *NFL Fever 2002* is polished enough with its playability and graphics to compete with *Madden* and *NFL2K*. There's still a problem with a sense of weightlessness for objects, but *Fever*'s good enough to create a three-way race for best *NFL* game this fall.

ODDWORLD: MUNCH'S ODDYSEE

Publisher: Microsoft Developer: Oddworld Inhabitants

■ *Munch's* gameplay is a combination of traditional run-and-jump platform elements, with some complicated puzzles in the mix. While it's too early to give a final verdict, we left our recent demo with a smile on our faces. (Once you see the Fuzzles in action, man, you'll know why.)

ASSUMING CONTROL

Microsoft's Xbox controller isn't for everyone (or possibly anyone). Luckily, you have choices...

Nyko X-Factor
M.S.R.P.: $34.99

Naki Xpad
M.S.R.P.: $29.99
(not shown)

Saitek Xpad
M.S.R.P.: $29.95

Mad Catz 900MHz Wireless Controller
M.S.R.P.: TBA
(not shown)

Pelican X-Wing
M.S.R.P.: $24.95

Nuby Standard Controller
M.S.R.P.: $24.99
(not shown)

Mad Catz Control Pad Pro
M.S.R.P.: $34.99

Nuby Enhanced Controller with MacroMap
M.S.R.P.: $34.99
(not shown)

Mad Catz Control Pad
M.S.R.P.: $24.99

Interact PowerPad
M.S.R.P.: $24.99
(not shown)

Thrustmaster Upad
M.S.R.P.: $39.99

Thrustmaster FireStorm Dual Power
M.S.R.P.: $29.99
(not shown)

Radica Vortex
M.S.R.P.: $29.99

(Xbox Launch Special continued on page 91)

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-PC Gamer 2001

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Black 107-Enhanced Keyboard
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with Alienware On-Site Home Service
Personalized Owner's Manual
Optimized & Configured for High-Performance
FREE FUNC Technical Surface Pad

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Financing as low as $66/MO., 48 MOS.

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60GB 7200RPM Hard Drive Ultra ATA100
NVIDIA GeForce3 nFinite-FX™ GPU 64MB DDR
Koolmaxx™ Video Cooling System
SoundBlaster LIVE! 5.1 Sound Card
Klipsch ProMedia 5.1 THX 500-Watt
Speaker & Subwoofer System
Pioneer 16X/40X DVD Player
Plexwriter 24X/10X/40X CD-RW IDE
Black Dragon Full-Tower ATX Case 340 Watt PS
Black 107-Enhanced Keyboard
Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer
U.S. Robotics V.90 56K Voice/Data/Fax Modem
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microsoft.com/games/mw4_blackknight

(Xbox Launch Special continued from page 87)

FINDING AN XBOX IN A HAYSTACK

So it's almost launch day, and you still haven't pre-ordered your Xbox? Don't worry. There's still a chance if you follow these tips:

GET IN LINE: Xbox VP Ed Fries told us that half the number of consoles slated for launch will be held for day-of sales, so there's still a chance of walking into a store and buying a unit on November 8. But forget videogame specialty stores such as Electronics Boutique and Babbage's; these stores cater to the hardcore, and there'll have long lines. Instead, go to Wal-Mart, Toys "R" Us, or Best Buy, all of which will have a limited number of units on launch day.

MONEY TALKS: Many retail clerks are told not to turn away guaranteed sales in order to hold reserved units, so show up with cash in hand and you may get lucky.

HIT THE ROAD: Do you live in a densely populated city such as San Francisco or New York, with a population that has a lot of disposable income? Take a road trip out to a nearby small town that may have fewer hardcore gamers looking to buy on Day 1.

And if all else fails...

BE PATIENT: Don't jump the gun and overspend on eBay. PlayStation 2s sold for three times their value last holiday, yet were available soon thereafter. Remember, there will be at least 600,000 units at launch in North America, and 1.5 million units by the end of the year.

SHREK

Publisher: TDK Mediactive
Developer: Digital Illusions

Shrek is actually a bit like *Oddworld* in that it tries to combine 3D platforming and puzzle-solving, but in our initial tests it seemed to lack the charm of the former and instead relies more on the recognition of the license — that, and lighting farts on fire.

TEST DRIVE OFF-ROAD WIDE OPEN

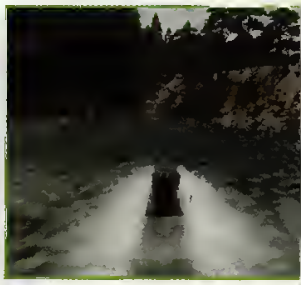
Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Angel Studios

While the PS2 version of this game got a lukewarm review (see page 108), Angel is upgrading its off-road racing experience for Xbox. Better textures and new multiplayer content should round out the package nicely.

4X4 EVO 2

Publisher: Take 2
Developer: Terminal Reality

Besides a next-generation graphical overhaul of its Dreamcast and PC prequel, Part Two offers players the option of not only racing your traditional circuit-type racer, but also taking part in more exploration-based, mission-oriented levels.



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING

Publisher: Microsoft **Developer: Bizarre Creations**

Much like the game's spiritual predecessor, *Metropolis Street Racer*, *Gotham* isn't so much about competitive racing as it is about technique and style. To the game's credit, however, everything has been refined from the previous effort — from the graphics right down to the control.

BEHIND THE WHEEL

Play driving games the way they are meant to be played

Saitek Xwheel
M.S.R.P.: TBA

Pelican Xbox Steering Wheel
M.S.R.P.: $29.95
(tentative title, not shown)

Radica Pro Racer
M.S.R.P.: $29.99

InterAct Black Thunder Racing Wheel
M.S.R.P.: $39.99
(not shown)

Thrustmaster NASCAR Pro Victory Wheel
M.S.R.P.: $59.99

Naki Xwheel
M.S.R.P.: $24.99
(not shown)

Mad Catz MC2
M.S.R.P.: $59.99

(Xbox Launch Special continued on page 93)

ROTOR RAGE

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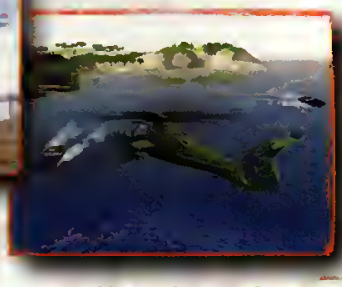
COMANCHE 4



View the trailer at **novalogic.com**

RATING PENDING RP ESRB

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(Xbox Launch Special continued from page 91)

WWF RAW IS WAR

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Anchor

Every system needs a wrestling title to satiate fans of this "sport," and THQ's game is just that — and more. A great grappling system is in place, thanks to Anchor's experience on Dreamcast's *UFC*, which may help *WWF* win over non-wrestling fans.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2X

Publisher: Activision **Developer: Treyarch**

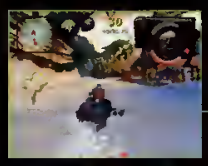
Xbox owners will have to wait until next year for *Hawk 3*, but this will give them plenty until then. There are five brand-new skate parks, and larger versions of every environment from both *THPS* and *THPS2* are included.

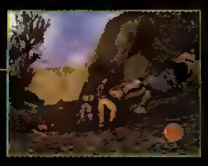
XBOX UPCOMING TITLES

There are tons of Xbox games in development, but many are based on publishers' second tier of franchises. Still, with so many games already in development, there may be the next *Resident Evil* or *Final Fantasy* hidden on this list

ACTION/ADVENTURE

Aquanox; TBA 2002
Armada II: Exodus; TBA
Ballers; 2002
Batman: Vengeance; December
Battlefield: 1942; TBA 2002
Blood Omen 2; Winter
Blood Wake; November
Bounty Hunter; Spring 2002
Bruce Lee; TBA 2002
Brute Force; 2002
Buffy the Vampire Slayer; Spring 2002
Call of Cthulu: Dark Corners of the Earth; TBA 2002
Call of the Dragonfly; TBA 2002
Cel Damage; November
Circus Maximus; 2002
Dark Summit; November
Dead to Rights; TBA 2002
Deus Ex 2; Winter 2002
Dino Crisis 3; 2002
Dragon's Lair 3D; TBA
Enclave; Feb 2002
Falcone: Into the Maelstrom; TBA
Fellowship of the Ring; 2002
Galleon; Spring 2002
Ghost Recon; Summer 2002
Gunmetal; Spring 2002
GunValkyrie; 2002
House of the Dead 3; 2002
Hunter: the Reckoning; March 15, 2002
Jet Set Radio Future; 2002
Jonny Drama; 2002
Malice; Spring 2002
The Matrix; Summer 2002
Medal of Honor: Allied Assault; TBA 2002
New Legends; November
Nightcaster; November
Onimusha Genma; 2002
Ozzy's Black Skies; December
Panzer Dragoon; TBA 2002
Pirates of Skull Cove; 2002
Project Ego; Fall 2002
Rayman Arena; March 2002
Shayde: Monsters vs. Humans; TBA
Silent Hill 2; November
Simpsons: Road Rage; November
Spider-Man: The Movie; May 2002
Star Wars Starfighter: Special Edition; November
Star Wars Obi-Wan; November
Thief III; Spring 2003
The Thing; Summer 2002
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3; Feb 2002
Unreal Championship; TBA 2002 (Online launch)
U.S.S. Antarctica; TBA
V.I.P.; 2002





FIGHTING

Kabuki Warriors; November
Kakuto X; Spring 2002
Loons — The Fight for Fame; Spring 2002
Mortal Kombat 5; Fall 2002
Soul Calibur 2; 2002
UFC: Tapout; November

MISC.

Tetris Worlds; Spring 2002
Wiggles; TBA

RACING

Arctic Thunder; November
Double S.T.E.A.L.; TBA
e-Racer; TBA
Ridge Racer; TBA 2002
SSX: Tricky; November
Test Drive; Spring 2002
Tyco R/C; Fall

RPG

Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse; TBA
Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind; December
Lord of the Rings; TBA 2002
Nightcaster; November
Project Ego; Fall 2002

SPORTS

All-Star Baseball 2003; Spring 2002
Dave Mirra's Freestyle BMX 2; November
ESPN International Winter Sports 2002; January 2002
ESPN National Hockey Night; TBA
ESPN NBA 2Night 2002; November
ESPN NFL Primetime 2002; November
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding 2002; January 2002
Gravity Games Street Vert Dirt; 2002
Insane Terrain; 2002
MLB Slugfest 2002; 2002
MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael; November
NBA2K2; Winter
NFL2K2; December
NFL Blitz 2002; Fall 2002
NFL Fever 2002; December
NHL Hitz; Fall
Outlaw Golf; Spring 2002
Red Card Soccer; 2002
Transworld Snowboarding; Spring 2002
Transworld Surf; November

STRATEGY

Commandos 2; TBA
Mutant Chronicles: Warzone Online; Spring 2002

CONTROLLER CORNUCOPIA

After all, not every game needs a pad or a wheel

InterAct ShadowBlade Arcade Stick
M.S.R.P.: $39.99

Pelican Arcade Stick
M.S.R.P.: $24.99

Saitek Xstick Flight Stick
M.S.R.P.: TBA
(not shown)

ThrustMaster FreeStyler Board
M.S.R.P.: $79.99

ThrustMaster Top Gun AfterBurner Joystick
M.S.R.P.: $49.99

ThrustMaster Top Gun Fox 2 Pro Joystick
M.S.R.P.: $39.99
(not shown)

Mad Catz Panther X
M.S.R.P.: $49.99

InterAct RumbleStick
M.S.R.P.: $34.99 (estimated)
(not shown)

Mad Catz Blaster
M.S.R.P.: $34.99

InterAct StarFire Light Blaster
M.S.R.P.: $29.99

Mad Catz Rumble Rod
M.S.R.P.: $34.99

InterAct Fishing Controller
M.S.R.P.: $29.99

NextGen

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MATURE
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Violence
Strong Language

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Note: Rockstar will be following IDSA guidelines for M rated games in the marketing of this game.
This game contains violent language and behavior and is not intended for persons under the age of 17. It is a comic interpretation of gangstar activity and the story, names and incidents portrayed herein are fictitious. No identification or similarity to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual events is intended or should be inferred. Any resemblance is coincidental. The makers and publishers of this videogame do not in any way endorse, condone or encourage this kind of behavior.

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Finals

It's a great month if you own a PlayStation 2 — thrills *and* chills. What more could you want?

PlayStation 2

Devil May Cry 96
Silent Hill 2 100
Armored Core 2: Another Age 100
Extermination 100
Ico 105
Gallop Racer 2001 105
Gitaroo Man 105
Le Mans 24 Hours 105
Spy Hunter 108
Mobile Suit Gundam 108
Stretch Panic 108
Test Drive: Off-Road Wide Open 108

■ No matter what else may or may not be said, *Devil May Cry* is arguably the best-looking PS2 game yet

■ PLAYSTATION 2

Devil May Cry

■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Developer: **Capcom**

The devil is in the details

In the brief history of PlayStation 2, few titles have been as hotly anticipated as Capcom's *Devil May Cry*, and the reason is easy to understand. Lead Designer Hideki Kamiya set out to create a game that was, in his words, "cool," and he and his team certainly succeeded.

This is impressive stuff. The production design is top-notch. Every level and area have been meticulously laid out, filled with layers of incidental detail and an impressive variety of textures. The creature designs are an interesting blend of classical Western demonology with more abstract anime standbys. You never know quite what you're going to run into next, and it certainly keeps you on your toes.

As the hero Dante, you explore a remote castle and vanquish the monsters within. Along the way, you acquire an increasingly powerful arsenal of weapons, but from a gameplay standpoint, more powerful does not always equal better. You'll find that quite often you have to switch back to "weaker" weapons, because they confer abilities that are useful outside of combat, or simply because they're better suited to dealing

Dreamcast

World Series Baseball 2K2 109

PlayStation

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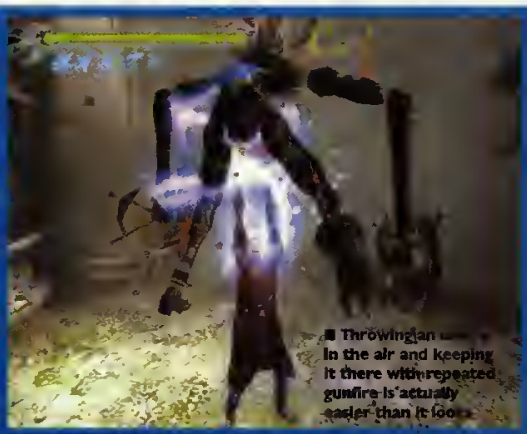
The Rating System

Since we're living in a time when even average games are pretty good, we at **Next Generation** will continue to demand even better. Note that a three-star rating is a typical "good" game, so expect to see a lot of them.

★★★★★ **REVOLUTIONARY**
★★★★☆ **EXCELLENT**
★★★☆☆ **GOOD**
★★☆☆☆ **FAIR**
★☆☆☆☆ **BAD**

● Denotes a review of a Japanese product



■ Throwing Dante in the air and keeping it there with repeated gunfire is actually easier than it looks

with a given enemy. The grenade launcher, for example, packs a wallop, but has a slow rate of fire and is practically useless when dealing with quick-moving specters. For all the game's emphasis on action, it does require intelligent use of the myriad resources at your command.

Each weapon also comes with a number of impressive moves and attacks that are relatively easy to execute. But having to qualify it as "relatively" points out one of the game's few, but serious, faults. As undeniably attractive as much of this is, all is not perfect.

DMC uses a third-person perspective, seen through a totally scripted camera, and mostly, this works. However, often the perspective shifts radically or even completely reverses itself without warning. This means that the direction you must push on the joystick to keep moving the same way reverses itself as well. In general you can continue to hold the joystick and keep moving the same direction anyway, but any letup or change of direction on the stick results in a resetting of the control. In the heat of battle, this can be rather disconcerting.

Furthermore, the scripted camera often robs you of the ability to follow, or even see, an enemy's position. It's perhaps unfortunate that the most egregious example of this occurs during the very first boss battle of the game, fighting the "lava scorpion," Phantom. This also brings up *DMC*'s other major problem: It is simply far too difficult. Now don't get us wrong — we welcome a challenge. However, *DMC* is also a relatively short game, and this level of difficulty seems to exist entirely to keep you from beating it within a few hours. As it is, it often takes a few hours to simply beat an individual boss (and on occasion, you'll have to face two or more boss and/or sub-boss battles in a row without a chance to save). This is, more often than not, frustrating rather than fun.

The odd thing is that, despite the frustrations, the bulk of *DMC* is compelling enough that you find yourself continually coming back, no matter how many times you've thrown the controller down in disgust. There are also a lot of hidden goals and missions, and the search for these is often as intriguing as the main game. In fact, finding and accomplishing these goals is often necessary; given the difficulty level, you really need every bonus item and power-up you can find. And actually, the puzzles are easy to figure out, and there's even a big, glowing yellow dot on the map to show you where to go next.

In the final analysis, this is a tremendously entertaining exercise. It's beautiful to behold, often cool beyond words, and a test of even the most hardcore gamer's skill. Just the sight alone of the final boss is awe-inspiring enough to make it worth the trouble of getting there. However, a number of unwise design decisions have also made it a less thrilling game than it could have been, or than we had hoped for. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

■ Each of Dante's weapons gives him a set of incredibly well-animated moves

THE DEVIL IN THE DEFINITIONS

Far be it from us to inject a bit of culture into a videogame landscape (and heaven forbid you should learn anything from reading **Next Gen**), but terminal cynics would do well to look up Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary*. First published in 1906, then greatly expanded in 1911, it remains one of the most clever (and still controversial) treatises on the human condition ever written.

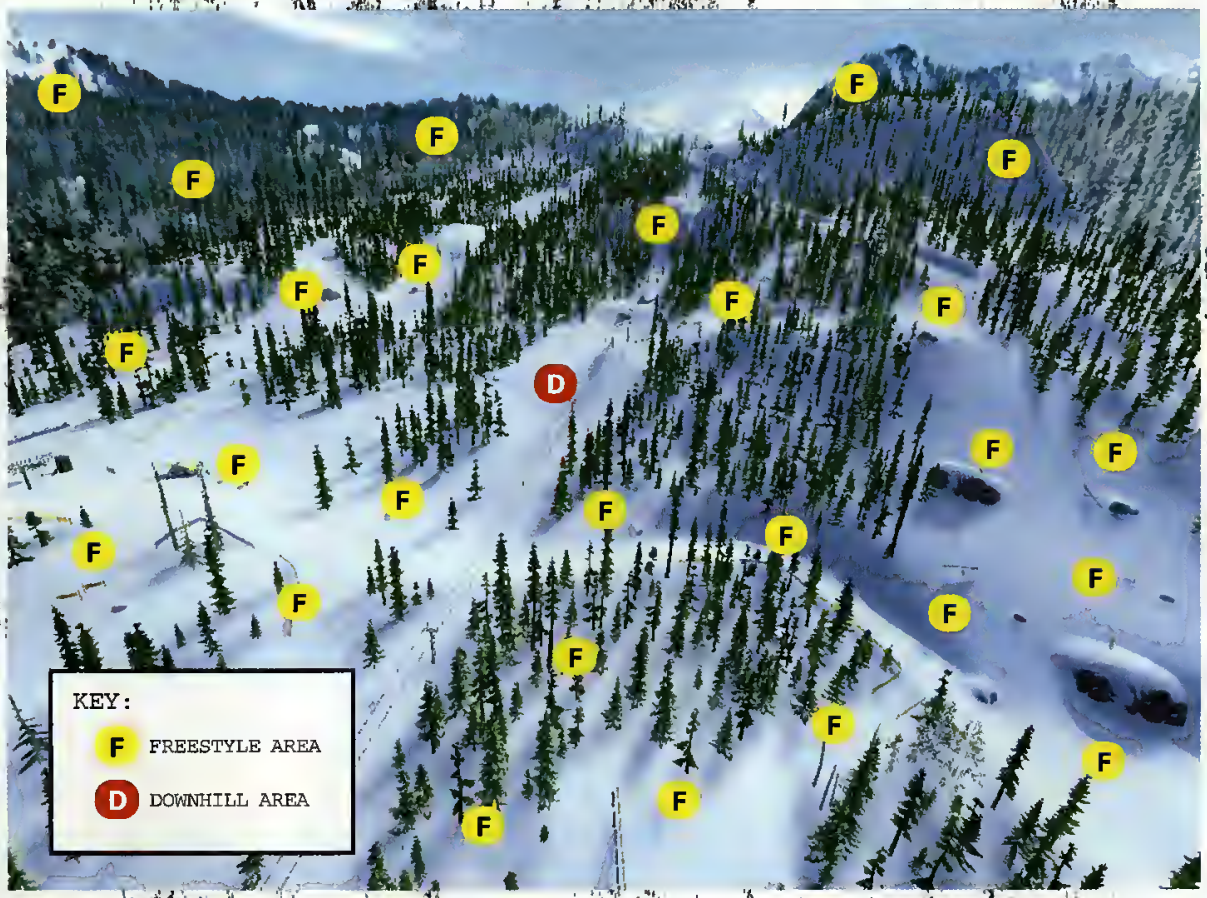
"MAN, n. An animal so lost in rapturous contemplation of what he is as to overlook what he ought to be. His chief occupation is the extermination of other animals and his own species, which, however, multiplies with such insistent rapidity as to infest the whole of the Earth and Canada."

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: *Devil May Cry* comes heartily recommended. Just be aware of a few caveats.

DAG YO! IT'S THE AMPED GUIDE TO FREESTYLE!

A BASIC GUIDE TO THE MOUNTAIN



EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MILD LYRICS

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THE RODEO FLIP: Also known as the "Don't Try This At Home." The nice part of this trick is that once you're insane enough to try it, you're probably ready for a magazine cover.

The nice thing about freestyle is that you can huck in the park (fig. A) or boost in the pipe (fig. B) and crack your pelvis either way.

THE MEDIA INTERVIEW:
Dos and Don'ts

DON'T:
Forget the shout-out
Act like you care

DO:
Act sullen
Speak incoherently

POCKET PHRASE TRANSLATOR

ENGLISH:
"THAT WAS A NICE TRICK."
FREESTYLE:
"DAG!"

ENGLISH:
"I LIKE YOUR PANTS."
FREESTYLE:
"DAG."

ENGLISH:
"I THINK I'VE FRACTURED MY PELVIS."
FREESTYLE:
"DAG."

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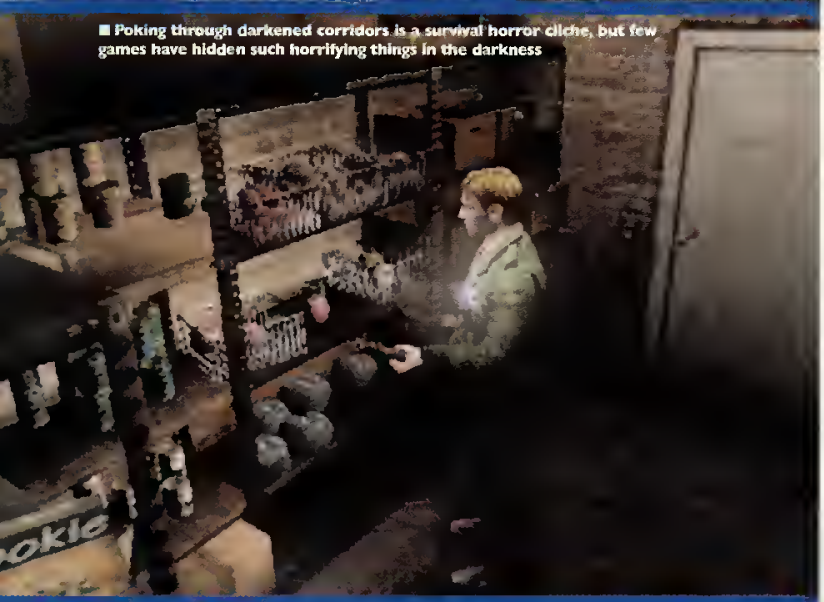


■ Poking through darkened corridors is a survival horror cliche, but few games have hidden such horrifying things in the darkness

■ PLAYSTATION 2

Silent Hill 2

■ Publisher: **Konami** ■ Developer: **Konami**

Stare into the abyss

Certain games get by as much on style as on substance. The coolest thing about *Silent Hill 2* is that as heavily stylized and atmospheric as it is, it's also rather well designed.

This is not so much a sequel as a variation on a theme; in fact, it's almost a remake. You arrive at the fog-shrouded town of Silent Hill in response to a letter you received from your wife, who died three years before (or something like that). Unfortunately, the little resort town is mostly abandoned, filled with especially gloppy, zombie-like creatures and the few remaining (and apparently quite insane) townspeople.

Although truly creepy games aren't as rare as they once were, few (if any) have been as chill-inducing or genuinely disturbing as *Silent Hill 2*. Indeed, we don't think we've come across anything quite like this in ony medium. Silent Hill is a place overrun by bloated, misshapen flesh, unnaturally twisted into impossible shapes. Both the in-game and pre-rendered cut scenes are among the best we've ever seen, and much of the writing and voice work is excellent. It's practically guaranteed to give you nightmares.

And the game behind the images more than backs this up. It definitely has its own sense of pace, which is admittedly a bit slow, but that suits the carefully crafted atmosphere. The puzzles are intriguing and mostly unique, with only one or two stumpers. The action, though, is simply repetitive, as even the most common creatures must be bludgeoned repeatedly to "kill" them (and there are a *lot* of creatures).

But what's most annoying (though it could be a virtue, depending on your taste) is the ultimate lack of explanation for anything. You can make some guesses, which we won't discuss here so as not to spoil anything, but coupled with a rather weak ending (there are four, but even the "best" ending is a puzzling downer), the result is confusion rather than catharsis. Still, the journey is so creepy and involving, in the end it hardly matters.

— *Jeff Lundrigon*

■ One complaint is there are too many "zombies"

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: It's not for the faint of heart, nor anyone looking for fast action, but those who enjoy a good shiver won't be disappointed.

Armored Core 2: Another Age

■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **From Software** ■ Developer: **Agetec**

Armored Core 2 falls just shy of being the *Gran Turismo 3* of mech games. It's got more missions (100!), more AC parts, over two dozen multiplayer maps, more custom emblems, and iLink support. But what it doesn't have is this expansion's *raison d'etre* in Japan: online support.

The Japanese version of *Another Age* supported modem play, but Agetec wasn't willing to sit on the game and wait for the broadband adapter to show up in the U.S. It was a prudent business decision, as few gamers are going to spend November cash on a modem with Solid Snake lurking on the shelves. But the result is a game that is palpably incomplete.

Nevertheless, the added depth and amazing single-player experience help make up for the loss. The 100 new missions feature some very creative and enormous levels with plenty of hidden areas. And while the combat can be difficult, the game richly rewards your efforts, so buying better AC parts is never too far out of reach.

■ This is easily one of the better mech games on console, despite the lack of multiplayer support

Graphically, the game is excellent, with brilliant, colorful explosions and attractive environments. The texture quality is inconsistent, though, with a little more tiling than we normally like, and some of the levels are simply too dark. The controls are fine with one notable exception. The right analog stick is once again ignored, when it, rather than L2 and R2, could be used to look up and down. Nonetheless, *Armored Core 2: Another Age* is not simply Another Game; it is rather the deepest mech game yet made for a console. — *Jim Preston*

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Only lack of the promised online supports keeps this from earning five stars.

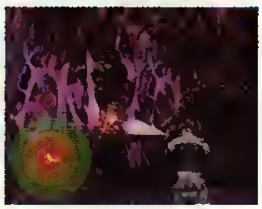
Extermination

■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **Sony** ■ Developer: **Sony**

Considering this title's delays and under-hyped release, at best we expected a second-rate *Resident Evil* clone. However, *Extermination* differentiates itself as a faster-paced action title, and holds its own with a few minor problems.

As a more action-oriented survival horror game, *Extermination* features more enemies and fewer elaborate puzzles. Fortunately, the action manages to stay interesting and intense, thanks to the variety of weapons and numerous types of hideously mutated monsters. Since each enemy possesses its own distinct strengths, weaknesses, and attack patterns, it's a challenge to discover how to exploit each one.

The puzzles and obstacles sufficiently break up the monotony of shooting, yet they remain simple enough not to disrupt the action; they usually consist of flipping switches or finding items to open locked areas.



■ Extermination's mutants are formidable, although they exist only to be destroyed

Extermination's significant faults involve some graphical glitches (which make certain areas painful to look at) and a trite story that's adequate but doesn't offer any surprises or memorable characters. However, if you're in the mood for a solid action title, this will fit the bill. — *Chester Barber*

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: You won't be blown away, but it's a solid, fast-paced action game with only a few problems.

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XBOX

PlayStation 2

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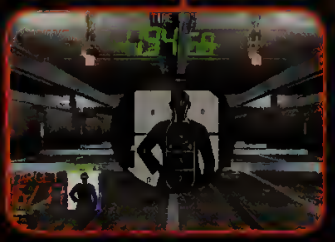

Silent Scope 2 Dark Silhouette brings heart-stopping, single and two player arcade action to the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system. You'll be armed with the latest hi-tech sniping equipment like the X-Ray Scope in order to thwart terrorist attacks throughout Europe.

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SILENT SCOPE 2™ Dark Silhouette™

MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Violence

PlayStation®2

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■ PLAYSTATION 2

Ico

■ Publisher: SCEA ■ Developer: SCEI

A ghost of a chance

■ Like other quirky but important titles (*PaRappa*, for instance), Ico may not be the pinnacle of its genre, but its influence will be felt for years to come

It's long been debated in industry circles whether or not games could ever achieve the same artistic status as other forms of entertainment media (movies, books, etc.). Some argue that the interactive nature of games limits the medium's chances because it forces designers and artists to work within an incredible amount of structure in order for their creations to work as games, which could theoretically obscure their emotional appeal and artistic merit.

But when a game like *Ico* comes along, the line between art and gaming gets slightly blurry. As a boy born with horns, Ico has been exiled by his town and buried alive in a castle. The game opens with Ico emerging from his stone casket to discover he is not alone. A young, strangely ethereal woman, Yorda, is also a prisoner within the castle, and Ico makes it his duty to both protect the girl from the shadow creatures that are after her, and to take her along as he tries to escape.

The castle itself is riddled with intriguing puzzles and traps. Using nothing but your wits, you must not only solve the puzzles to progress, but you're also responsible for guiding Yorda through them. It's an ingenious mix of platformer, puzzler, and roleplaying that works incredibly well. The unique visual approach makes it intensely realistic at times, and the simple — if constant — necessity of keeping Yorda from harm results in a surprising level of emotional investment.

Unfortunately, that investment clocks in at around six hours and promises little to no replay value. But, approached as an interactive and emotionally satisfying bedtime story, *Ico* succeeds wonderfully. Just be aware that it's a very short story. — *Francesca Reyes*

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: Intensely involving and wonderfully simple, *Ico*, though flawed, deserves to find its niche as a quiet classic.

Gallop Racer 2001

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: Tecmo ■ Developer: Tecmo

"Legends of famous, told through generations. It's your turn to conquer the bold and the brave. Then another legend will be born." Thus begins *Gallop Racer*, the first title to make it to the U.S. to actually enable you to get up on a horse and ride it, racing-game style. It's also one of those off-the-wall Japanese creations that you never quite know how Americans are going to take.

Initially it can all be quite baffling. Fortunately a virtual "navigator," the lovely Cindy, will guide you through the basics of choosing and buying horses, then managing a season by training them, deciding which races they will run, and riding them. And in case you forget you're playing a Japanese game, Cindy is quick to wish you, "Best luck to become the number-one jockey!"

Despite the initial impenetrability, the rewards are there for those who persist, and if you have any interest in real horse racing you'll have a blast. The graphics are nice, and given the mechanics of racing a horse (whipping it to go faster), it controls well enough. It earns our admiration for simply being different and is likely to have everybody crowding around the television at your next party. — *Gary Whitta*

■ At last, a game for folks who want to be jockeys

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: It's unlikely to kick-start widespread U.S. interest in a strange Japanese genre, but as a break from the norm it's just the ticket.

Gitaroo Man

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: Koei ■ Developer: Koei

Simply put, *Gitaroo Man* is one of the most entertaining titles yet in the rhythm-action genre. Featuring a deft blend of different game styles, awesome music, and more personality than anything we've seen in quite a while, it's not only entertaining, but it'll also charm your socks off.

As the superhero Gitaroo Man, you battle musical enemies ranging from the devil to "Day of the Dead"-style robots with maracas. The game features two distinct types of play, and the first is familiar: Hit buttons to match the onscreen cues and the music. The game then adds a mode in which you must not only hit a button in time to the rhythm, but use the analog stick to follow an onscreen path.

The scenarios are so stylish you hardly mind the less-than-original gameplay. In fact, one of our favorite bits is when (after several stages of intense combat) our hero just relaxes under a tree and serenades his girlfriend as the sun sets. It's that eclectic mix of gameplay and personality that makes this a must-play. — *Blake Fischer*

■ This is the most charming game since *Samba de Amigo*

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: The genius here isn't in any bold gameplay innovations; it's that it delivers a fun, well-rounded package that is beautifully crafted.

Le Mans 24 Hours

■ Platform: PlayStation 2 ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Melbourne House

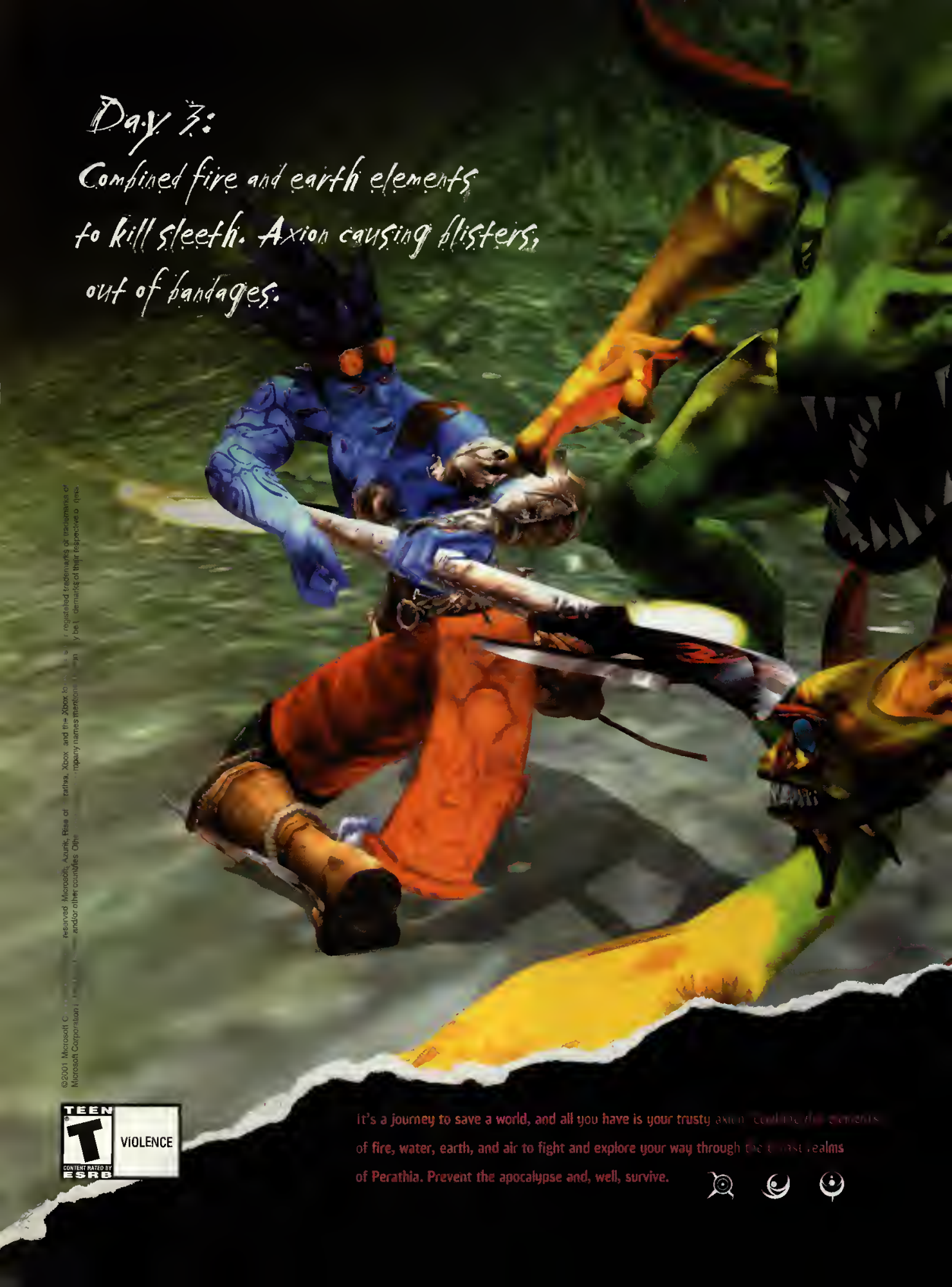
Frankly, we're growing tired of racing games. Notable exceptions (the upcoming *Project Gotham* and a few hybrids like *Spy Hunter* or *Grand Theft Auto 3*) show signs of trying new things. But even genre leaders (*Gran Turismo 3*, for instance), while excellent, can be accused of doing little more than reinventing the wheel. This latest entry is equally guilty, being yet another checkpoint-to-checkpoint semi-sim, and racers yearning for something new will run out of gas quickly.

However, it is worth noting that circuit purists will appreciate the fine graphics — try to play spot-the-pop-in and you'll come up with zero — and wide variety of tracks. Game options include the grueling 24-hour Le Mans event itself, of course, along with numerous ways to tune the cars. The controls handle well, and there's plenty of longevity thanks to a long campaign circuit and multiplayer modes. Genre purists should check it out. Just don't expect anything new. — *Gary Whitta*

■ *Le Mans 24 Hours* will mostly appeal to racing purists, but they'll love it

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: While *Le Mans 24 Hours* has the chops to keep circuit-based racing fans satisfied for more than a few laps, it's nothing new.


Day 3:
Combined fire and earth elements
to kill sleeth. Axion causing blisters,
out of bandages.
It's a journey to save a world, and all you have is your trusty axion. Combine the elements
of fire, water, earth, and air to fight and explore your way through the [illegible] realms
of Perathia. Prevent the apocalypse and, well, survive.

Day 11:
Went for a swim.
Electrocuted a golem.
Mixing elements is tiring.
Must sleep.
Day 19:
Saving the world is lonely. Axion only friend.
Named him Bob. Funny Bob.
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Finals

PlayStation 2

■ PLAYSTATION 2

Spy Hunter

■ Publisher: **Midway** ■ Developer: **Paradigm**

Better than Bond?

■ While mostly linear, the levels are exceptionally well designed and do sport e few hidden shortcuts

The number of times a classic game has been updated in a way that both takes advantage of current technology, yet remains faithful to the spirit of the original, can be counted on the fingers of one hand. With *Spy Hunter*, you can make that two hands.

This is especially pleasing because the original *Spy Hunter* was a 2D combination of racing and combat, and over the last few years, 3D car combat has become a genre unto itself. It would have been easy to simply churn out a *Twisted Metal* clone, throw in the *Peter Gunn* theme, and call it *Spy Hunter*. Instead, Paradigm obviously took a long look at the original and figured out the best way to retain what made it fun while expanding on the basics.

As a result, control is tight, the graphics are lovely, and all the levels (nearly all, anyway) are a good challenge and very nicely balanced. There's a cool selection of weapons, and the mission goals are always different — even if they mostly amount to "blow stuff up."

In fact, the only problem is there just isn't enough of it. With exactly 14 levels and no apparent extras or bonuses, you can easily beat the whole thing it in a day or three. Too bad. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: It's a sheer blast, and a fine update to a classic game, but it's still more a rental than a keeper.

■ In its early stages, *Spy Hunter* is almost exactly like playing e 3D version of the '80s original

Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo

■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **Bandai** ■ Developer: **Bandai**

Videogames based on TV shows are usually no better than games based on movies — i.e. they're bad. But Bandai deserves credit for seamlessly mixing TV and videogames in *Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo*, an uneven but still entertaining effort.

Journey to Jaburo manages to catch up US audiences with the original *MSG* by brilliantly mixing animation from the show with in-engine cut scenes, bringing the adventure home. The only problem is that the TV show has better production values than the game. The graphics are merely ordinary, with bland textures, and while the mechs look OK, the environments are washed out and jaggy. The controls are awkward; aiming at ground units is relatively simple with the analog stick, but targeting air opponents is almost impossible. Long, elegant battles are possible over wide terrain, but pulling off delicate moves in close combat is difficult and often frustrating. The single-player mode can be beaten in less than four hours, and while this unlocks the excellent Battle mode, the lack of multiplayer combat consigns this one to mediocrity. — *Jim Preston*

■ This captures the atmosphere of its source, but muffs the gameplay

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: The mixture between television show and videogame is superb, but the actual gameplay is not.

Stretch Panic

■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **Conspiracy** ■ Developer: **Treasure**

Despite Treasure's reputation among the hardcore for quietly creating some of the most original and addictive games ever conceived, its eagerly anticipated PS2 entry has come as quite a disappointment. Although *Stretch Panic* offers a unique premise and look, and a few creative elements, the execution remains mediocre.

Stretch suffers from shallow gameplay and outright boring level design throughout its six-hour adventure (yes, it's that short). Your weapon is a possessed scarf, but you're only given a few basic attacks, making the game feel repetitive after only an hour or two.

The only thing that keeps *Stretch* from being a total dud is its Boss stages, which are really the game's focus. Each boss manages a few interesting surprises and provides a good challenge, but with a mere 12 bosses, and given the jittery camera and repetitive attacks, even the boss fights are underwhelming. — *Chester Borber*

■ These large-breasted women are a spectacle, but the only enemy in the game

NextGen ★★☆☆☆

Bottom Line: *Stretch Panic* looks unique and includes a few original ideas, but with such a flawed game design, it's not worth the effort.

Test Drive: Off-Road Wide Open

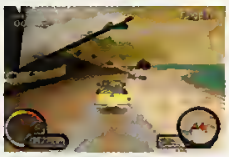
■ Platform: **PlayStation 2** ■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **Angel Studios**

Like a shiny new Honda hatchback, *Test Drive Off-Road* is reasonably solid, but you sure aren't going to pick up any chicks with it. The basic conceit is pretty simple: Race through a Season mode, buying better off-road vehicles with your winnings, and then race on the unlocked tracks.

The physics are less than realistic, firmly focused on outrageous leaps and axle-cracking landings. But with no damage modeling at all and loose handling, no one is going to mistake this for anything other than an arcade racer.

The 16 tracks are nicely varied but sport only ordinary visuals with some random pop-in and too-shiny cars (we guess reflection mapping is the first thing most developers learn on PS2). The most annoying thing is that the game ignores the basic mass of the vehicles, allowing much lighter cars to simply push around even the behemoths on the road.

But once the truly tricked-out sport trucks are unlocked, the speed, fun, and Metallica-heavy soundtrack are hard to actively dislike. It may be a hatchback, but it's better than walking. — *Jim Preston*



■ *Off-Road Wide Open* is a solid game, but nothing all thet special either

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: An all-too-familiar entry in the *Test Drive* series, but there's fun to be had.

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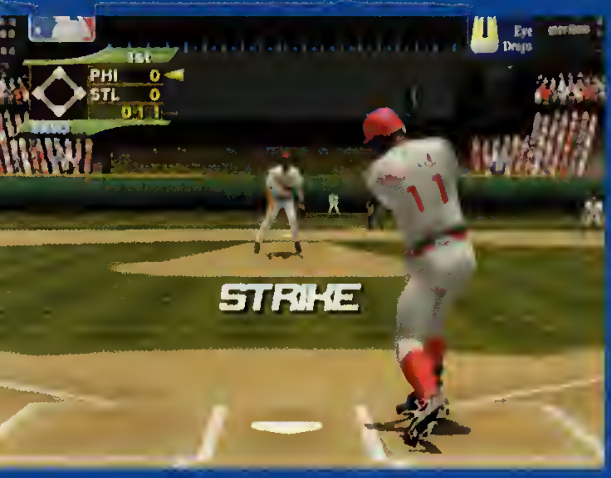
■ DREAMCAST

World Series Baseball 2K2

■ Publisher: **Sega Sports** ■ Developer: **Blue Shift/Visual Concepts**

The miracle turnaround

The first *World Series Baseball* for Dreamcast was developed by Wow Entertainment, as in, "Wow, that's bad." The game was universally panned by critics, so Sega pulled the title and let developer Blue Shift take a swing (under the watchful eye of Visual Concepts), with much better results. The gameplay is significantly improved; the graphics are polished; and a host of gameplay modes have been packed in.



■ **It's hard to believe this series has sprung back so completely from the mess of last year**

Visually, *WSB2K2* is superb — easily on par with what we expect from the *2K* line of sports titles. Players eerily resemble their real-world counterparts; the animations are fluid and lifelike; and there are loads of little touches throughout the game. Just as impressive is the sheer amount of modes and stats. You can track 13 different categories through an entire 162-game season, fire up the home-run derby with some friends for a quick contest, or hop online and play against real-life opponents around the country.

■ **It's still not quite up to the standards set in *WSB*'s glory days, but it's darned close**

The network code is the most obvious weakness in *WSB2K2*. Because baseball games simply demand fluid movement to be at all playable, the repeated lag during an online game can make the experience frustrating at best. Sega's online server does a nice job of keeping track of stats, but it is clear that baseball games are never going to flourish online without broadband connections.

There are some other minor flaws, such as the one-dimensional commentator, the camera positioning during deep fly balls, and the tough computer opponents. But this game, unlike its predecessor, has actual fielding and reliable hitting, and that makes it undoubtedly the best baseball game in the Dreamcast library.

— Jim Preston

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: A vast improvement over the original with only a few shortcomings to mar the outing.

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PlayStation Finals

■ You might notice some new animations, but that's about it

■ PLAYSTATION

NFL GameDay 2002

■ Publisher: Sony ■ Developer: 989

The last Day

There's a reason that the testers over at Sony quietly refer to this franchise as *NFL SameDay*: it really hasn't changed much in recent years. But that isn't necessarily a bad thing. *NFL GameDay 2002* is undoubtedly the last of the series for the venerable PSX, and it's a fine farewell.

Just about everything that was included in the 2001 version is included here, along with some fun additions. *GameDay*'s fine "touch control passing" system, the excellent animation, and deep AI are still here. The new additions include all the past teams that have made it to the Super Bowl, easier tackle breaking to encourage more action and gang tackling, and a mode that lets you create "super players" that is every bit as odd as it sounds.

Graphically the game seems untouched from last year's version. There are, of course, a few new animations such as very cool drag tackles and spine-shattering collisions, but it is hardly spectacular. The audio commentary is a real weakness again, as neither Dick Enberg nor Dan Fouts is particularly colorful or interesting, and after having heard the same canned speeches a few times, you'll likely turn them off.

The gameplay is still very fast, whether you go with the arcade or simulation modes. Fortunately, years of making *GameDay* titles means that the controls are just about perfect now, and very intuitive. All the modes you'd expect are there, along with a host of options, a bucketful of stats, and loads of fun with a few friends. If you still have to buy games for original PlayStation (and we're not sure why you do), this one is worth your scratch. — *Jim Preston*

■ It looks largely the same, and plays largely the same, but in this case, that's still good enough

NextGen ★★★★☆

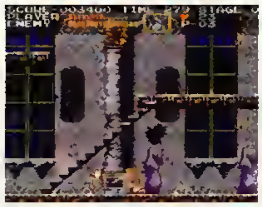
Bottom Line: The *GameDay* reputation took a beating with last year's PS2 debut, but this excellent PlayStation effort restores some of the shine to the franchise.

Castlevania Chronicles

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: KCET

Horror fans can't resist a game with bite. Konami knows this, having regularly resurrected its vampire series *Castlevania* back to undead life for years. Although merely a remixed, obscure, 8-bit Japanese X68000 entry in the timeless series, *Chronicles* likewise waxes nostalgic in more ways than one.

To be blunt, '80s flashbacks come with the territory here. Both whip-wieldin' play and archaic visuals evoke images of an NES cartridge on steroids. But if the concept seems a tad dry, the action doesn't. Despite stumbling blocks incurred through high difficulty settings, you'll happily relive youthful days by dying, then restarting each stage umpteen times. However, deathtraps and enemy encounters are often so clever, appreciative gamers will gladly fall prey to them. Whether you're facing down mudmen, archer statues, or hopping hunchbacks, it's always a wild ride — count on being pleasantly shocked, over and over.



■ The graphics may look 10 years old (actually, they are) but it's still good enough for a thrill

Ironically, added perks are the features of the least interest. A barely enhanced Arrange Mode, unimpressive CG sequences, and a grainy interview with producer Koji Igarashi bear little merit. Fans will be much happier jumping right into battle, where one can marvel at the anachronistic animation quality, and yet be surprised at just how good a game this still is. — *Scott Steinberg*

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Grade-A smack for *Castlevania* collectors, and a damn fine experiment in classic gaming for everyone else.

Spider-Man 2 Enter: Electro

■ Platform: PlayStation ■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Vicarious Visions

A spare year ago, Activision and Neversoft's *Spider-Man* managed one of videogaming's (surprisingly) rarer feats: a game that managed to nicely capture both the action and the essence of a comic book. A 3D, web-slinging romp, the game had a few quirks, but was solid, fast-paced, and thoroughly enjoyable. Activision has handed the development chores over to Vicarious Visions (who also handled the Game Boy version — perhaps telling, perhaps not) for this sequel, and the result is both more of, and slightly less than, the same.

The veritable Who's Who of Spidey villains from the original have been pared down somewhat, concentrating on the titular Electro, along with Lizard, Sandman, and a couple of others (a few of the X-Men also put in guest appearances). For the most part, the third-person gameplay remains identical, although it seems like most areas are both larger, more open, and yet less detailed than before. There's also a slightly rushed feel to the design and overall balance, with oddly easy sections occasionally punctuated by random moments of frustrating difficulty.

■ Just don't call it *Spidey 2: Electro Boogaloo*

Still, the formula hasn't been fooled with too much, and overall it's been more than competently executed, striking a nice mix of straight-up action and more thoughtful, strategic web shooting. Those who've mastered the original will feel right at home with this one. — *Jeff Lundrigan*

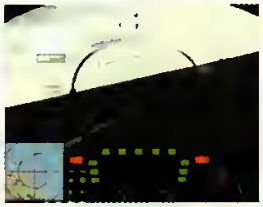
NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: A worthy successor, if not as exceptional as the original.

Eurofighter Typhoon

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Take 2 Interactive ■ Developer: DID (Digital Image Design)/Rage

Most flight games are either very arcade-like or very sim-like, attracting two different camps. *Eurofighter Typhoon* is the first PC game in recent memory to successfully mix both styles of play into one mostly beautiful package.



■ ***Eurofighter*'s mix of arcade feel and sim-level detail should appeal to most anyone**

You begin with the option of going into a peacetime situation (essentially training) or a war, both of which are introduced through slick, in-game cut scenes. The menus and interface are both useful and convenient, a rare treat in games of this nature.

The airborne battles are an absolute pleasure. The physics almost seems arcade-like, although a little research on the real-world Eurofighter aircraft says that this is pretty accurate. It's very difficult to stall and nearly impossible to spin out of control — unless you take damage to a system, at which point you may as well be in a biplane.

The missions play out semi-dynamically and you almost always have a few wingmen at your control, helping with the often lengthy and sometimes difficult battles. Everything carries with it an amazing sense of speed, and the detail on the planes is staggeringly good.

— *Kevin Rice*

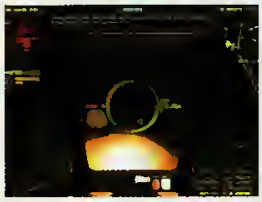
NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: An incredible sense of speed combined with an intuitive interface makes for an addictive flight sim. Recommended.

Independence War 2: The Edge of Chaos

■ Platform: PC ■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Particle Systems

Wild West fans should love space-combat sims. They follow similar story paths — a sprawling frontier, good versus evil, one man against overwhelming odds, blazing guns, and damned few womenfolk. *Independence War 2* is a gripping space oater with a solid story, slick graphics, thunderous explosions, and loads of puzzles to solve.



■ **Part space flight, part RPG, *Independence War 2* has its charms**

The hero is Cal Johnston, a young space cowboy out to avenge his father's death, and the villains are ruthless mega-corporations. As either mercenaries or space pirates, you'll send Cal and his band zipping through 50 neatly integrated combat missions in 16 star systems, and you'll control tactics at four bridge stations — command, engineering, navigation, and weapons (Hint: Shields can't cover propulsion systems, so sneak in behind the enemy and go for unprotected engine nacelles.)

The space flight mechanics take some getting used to. It's fairly realistic, based squarely on classic Newtonian physics, which means no stopping on a dime. Inertia rules, and once you get going, it can take a frustrating amount of time to slow down and change course. Gamers not hooked on star jaunts and sci-fi melodrama may find the slow physics and steep learning curve too daunting.

But dedicated space cowboys will cheer lustily, and well they should. *Independence War 2* offers a super ride with enough guns, galaxies, and gripping story quirks to make a compelling space sim.

— *John Lee*

NextGen ★★★☆☆

Bottom Line: Only a too-accurate space flight model mars this otherwise compelling space Western.

■ **As a mech mercenary leader, you can send up to 16 customizable mechs into battle**

■ PC

Mech Commander 2

■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ Developer: Microsoft

The big guys are back

FASA's towering mechs have been banging away at each other for 16 years. But with the *MechCommander* series, the battling behemoths clank onstage for a realtime strategy outing, which makes it much closer to the original BattleTech board game than *MechWorrior*'s 3D "sims."

MechCommander was released in '98, but for some reason it never caught on. This new, improved version should do better. It looks great, with dynamic lighting, wild explosions, and destructible terrain. The story line is pretty standard stuff. Things have gone to hell on the planet Carver V, and as a MechCommander mercenary, you herd a team of mechanical killers through 24 missions for whoever has the deepest pockets. If you win, you get big bucks. You also get to scavenge crucial parts from destroyed enemy machines. There are role-playing elements as well, as your mech pilots gain medals and valuable experience for later missions.

You have a choice of 29 customizable mechs; combat is fast and absorbing; and tactics are important. Some of the missions can be quite lengthy, but there's a handy quick-save feature now that was conspicuously missing in the original.

The downside? There's no skirmish mode, so you can play only through largely linear missions. But the eye-catching graphics, solid sound effects, easy interface, and some nice multiplayer options more than make up for missing skirmishes.

— *John Lee*

NextGen ★★★★☆

Bottom Line: An eminently playable, thoroughly engrossing game that's very close to its roots.

■ **Long distance slugfests call for special mechs, so choose your teams carefully**

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Letters

All is write with the world

I've been noticing lately that no game is actually exclusively for one system — *Resident Evil Code: Veronico*, for instance. It was supposed to be exclusively for Dreamcast, but Capcom dresses up the graphics a little, adds a thing or two, and calls it *Resident Evil Code: Veronico X* for PS2. Developers shouldn't say anything is an exclusive unless they know for sure that they're not going to bring it out for another system in the future.

"Striker"
Via email

True enough. The American Heritage Dictionary defines "exclusive," as "adj. Not divided or shared with others," and "n. An exclusive right or privilege, as to market a product." In the game industry, this generally means, "Never to be released in a form compatible with another system." Typically however, publishers put a time limit on the idea, saying "exclusive for one year" or somesuch — a contradiction in terms, since by definition, exclusivity is an immutable concept and does not allow for the concept of a time limit. You're correct that, technically, the truthful phrase would be, "We won't publish Game X on another system for at least a year or until we think we can make some more money off it." But hey, our modern commercial culture devalues all kinds of words and phrases. Which sort of brings us to:

What's with everything being described as "ultra-realistic" in games? I thought there was just "realistic" and "unrealistic"? How can something be more than realistic? I think it's a joke calling any game "realistic" at this point anyway. How I drive on the highway is realistic; how I drive in *Driver* or *Need for Speed*, or even *Smuggler's Run* (with its "realistic" suspension and physics), is not realistic. I would just call those games fun.

While I'm talking about fun, can someone get the word out to Konami to do a long-overdue sequel/update to the NES classic *Bosewors*? This is probably the only baseball game I've ever liked, and with fighting robots being all the rage these days I'd think this would be a sure thing. While we're at it, how about a good word for an update to *Dragon Spirit*? *Splatterhouse* would be great as well.

Mark Buckingham
Via email

Realistic: "adj. 1. Tending to or expressing an awareness of things as they really are. 2. Accurately representing what is depicted or described: The novel was a realistic depiction of ghetto life." In this case, there clearly can be degrees of "realism" (i.e. to what degree does it represent reality?), so it makes sense to say something is "ultrarealistic." It may be hyperbolic, but it is a valid construction. Of course, you're free to argue all you want about whether (in this case) a game actually does represent reality that closely, but that's a separate debate.

As for a remake of *Bosewors*, Midway is working on a baseball entry into its *Blitz* franchise, called *MLB Slugfest*, which sounds at least nominally similar in concept. No one seems to be updating either *Dragon Spirit* or *Splotterhouse* though — too bad.

Regarding the ability of Linux to run Windows games (**NG 09/01**), Trey Pratt's friend might have been talking about VMware (www.vmware.com), an application for various operating systems that allows them to run other OSs on top of the main installation. For example, I can run Linux, install VMware, and then install Win2k on top of Vmware. VMware then takes care of all of the mapping from Win2k calls to Linux calls. I could then run any Windows application (including games) on my Linux box (with an attendant performance hit, of course).

"sushee!"
Via email

I was a little stricken to see your nasty response to Trey Pratt, whose friend said that Linux can run Windows applications. He's "cracked"? Have you ever tried researching a subject before calling people cracked? Directly from their web site (www.winehq.com):

"WINE is an implementation of the Windows 3.x and Win32 APIs on top of X and Unix. Think of WINE as a Windows compatibility layer. WINE provides both a development toolkit (WINElib) for porting Windows sources to Unix and a program loader, allowing unmodified Windows 3.1/9S/NT binaries to run under Intel Unixes. WINE works on most popular Intel Unixes, including Linux, FreeBSD, and Solaris. WINE does not require Microsoft Windows, as it is a completely alternative implementation consisting of 100% Microsoft-free code, but it can optionally use native system DLLs if they are available."

Many games and applications that were not compiled to be natively supported under Linux,

HOW FREQUENT?

Upon reading your preview of Sony's upcoming *Frequency*, something struck me about the game as vaguely familiar. Sure enough, after 10 minutes of searching through my stack of Japanese PlayStation demo discs, I found one that had a demo of a game called *Beat Planet Music*, in which you control an icon speeding down oddly shaped tunnels, touching groups of glowing dots to complete a musical beat. There's even a line that shows up right before the dots appear, just like in the screenshots of *Frequency*. I don't know how the game did in Japan, but SCEA never localized it for the U.S., probably owing to its being such a niche title. Sounds like the folks at Harmonix have borrowed some of *BPM*'s features and added a few more to bump it up to PS2 quality, if you ask me. Nothing wrong with that, I just hope they give the makers of *BPM* some props along the way.

Greg Wilcox
Via email

Nice catch, and thanks for pointing this out. Visually, *Beat Planet Music* (which was released in late '99) does resemble *Frequency*, though the gameplay differs quite a lot. In fact, to *BPM*'s credit, in the full version you could also edit your own music tracks (which happened to be much more interesting in theory than in practice). It's worth noting, though, that a lot of rhythm-action games represent the music by running a cursor along a line.

■ *Frequency* (left) may bear a visual resemblance to *Beat Planet Mania* (right), but they both resemble many other rhythm-action games

such as *Half-Life*, run quite well under WINE.

"ernewman"
Via email

We got a ton of letters like these. Folks, read our response in its entirety: After explaining that Linux could not run WinX applications directly (as Trey said his friend claimed), we said, "...given the nature of Linux, someone out there might have rigged some kind of DirectX emulator, but we doubt that would confer any advantage." It's there in plain yellow and black. If you'd like, we'd be happy to revise that to, "Given the nature of Linux, there are definitely a number of WinX emulators available, but we have yet to find one that confers any advantage." Of course, if you feel being "100% Microsoft-free" is an advantage unto itself, you're certainly welcome to that opinion, but be aware that others feel differently (or don't even care).

Your **NG 09/01** cover story on *Devil May Cry* was a great preview — it made me want to play the game when before I wasn't even interested. However, one problem I saw was that on page 47, underneath the "Devil in Disguise" paragraph, you write, "While we have no doubt that some of the bosses in *MGS2* will be incredibly cool..." I must have read that paragraph numerous times, but I'm still not sure whether I'm reading about *Metal Gear Solid*, or is it about *Devil May Cry*. I'm pretty sure it's a typo, but I just want to make sure.

Adam Kaplan
Manalapan, NJ

Yes, it's a typo of sorts — actually, it was just edited a bit strangely (probably for space, definitely under deadline pressure, although that's no real excuse), and you're right, the meaning isn't clear. The sentence originally read, "While we have no doubt that that some of Kojima's bosses in the equally anticipated *MGS2* will be incredibly cool, this one in *Devil May Cry* takes the prize as the best special effect we've seen on PS2 so far." We apologize for the confusion.

In your recent article on Videogame U., which was brilliant by the way, you failed to mention which, if any, universities offered majors or degrees in videogames. I was wondering if you could email me a list of which ones would offer degrees/majors. It would be extremely helpful.

Robby Detling
Via email

We're glad you found the article of interest (and wish game classes were around when we were going to school). Unfortunately, while there are an increasing number of classes devoted to aspects of game design, at present time no university offers an actual undergraduate degree in videogames. As the feature mentioned, a professor at U.C. Irvine recently proposed such a major and it was shot down. A few, like Digipen and Full Sail, offer accredited degrees in game design, but these are more like trade schools than universities.

In response to Jeffrey Jamison's letter in **NG 08/01** regarding the "X Curse," I thought it worth mentioning the many successes bearing the letter "X." The X-Wing Fighter, The X-Men, punk rock label Triple X Records, and Racer X (who we know is Speed's older brother) have all enjoyed lasting popularity. Perhaps Jamison's examples demonstrate the exceptions, rather than the rule.

Although Mr. Jamison's letter was clearly tongue-in-cheek, I find it extremely frustrating how many of my fellow gamers refuse to give Xbox a chance. With the untimely demise of Dreamcast and the less-than-overwhelming success of PS2, the soon-to-be-released GameCube and Xbox will play a huge part in shaping the future of games. While Microsoft has made every effort to produce a platform that's easy to develop for with a potentially long life span and some innovative titles, Nintendo has openly described its hardware as only being sufficient to produce the kind of games they envision. We as gamers must demand more than decade-old gameplay with better graphics, and it seems like Xbox is our best hope on the console market. I like Mario as much as the next guy, but I want games that push the envelope.

Sony Green
Via email

Yah. See our Xbox hardware review on page 83.

A BONE TO PICK

I recently received **NG 09/01** and noticed your special coverage on *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. I found it to be a great article and very informative. I've been waiting for more info on the game for a while now and the screenshots just don't give the game justice.

I did, however, notice an incorrect statement. You credit Gray Matter for the development of a skeletal animation system in the *Quake III Arena* engine. This is actually incorrect. While id software did base animations off of the segmented character routines, they did indeed develop a skeletal animation system in one of the 1.27 point release versions of Q3A that could be used by custom modelers as an alternative to the old system. While the normal *Quake III Arena* models still obeyed the same animation routines, players could make their own custom models and instead utilize a skeletal animation system. The skeletal animation IS in *Quake III Arena*, but it is only there for alternatives in the modeling process.

"Cochran"
Via email

■ **We knew *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* had backbone, but this is ridiculous...**

"As an alternative to the modeling process" is the key here; there still was no support for skeletal animation within Q3A itself. The patch in question simply made it easier for model makers to adapt animation routines developed using bones (or similar tools, like Autodesk's Character Studio for 3DS MAX) to the keyframe system used within the game engine. Gray Matter has gone all the way, providing direct support for skeletal animation while actually playing the game. And actually, Valve added a skeletal animation system to the *Quake II* engine for *Half-Life*, which, if you want to get technical, pre-dates them both.

CORRECTIONS

(We're playing catch up here, so bear with us.) In Retroview from **NG 10/01**, we reported the acronym AMOA as standing for "Amusement Machine Operators Association." It actually stands for "Amusement and Music Operators Association."

In **NG 09/01**, Tom Russo's In the Studio wrongly reported that the forthcoming PlayStation game, *Monsters Inc.*, was being developed internally by Disney Interactive. The game is being developed by Montreal-based A2M, to be published by Disney Interactive. Tom regrets the error and hopes each of you will find it in your heart to forgive the spectral copy gnomes who ghost-write his column for him.

In **NG 08/01**, our preview of the GameCube *Madden NFL 2002* included a quote from Senior Producer "Jeremy Mauser"; his name is spelled Jeremy Strauser.

In **NG 07/01** we referred to former **Next Gen** EIC Chris Charla as a "bald-faced liar who wouldn't know an honest thought if it bit him." Chris Charla is, in fact, rarely clean-shaven.

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– GameSpot July 2001

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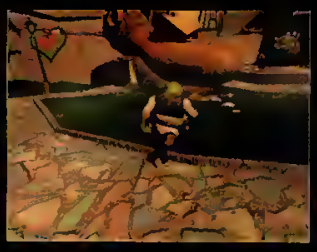
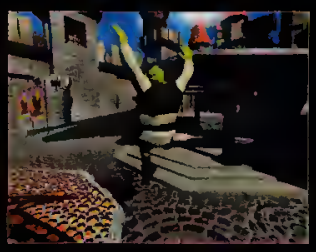
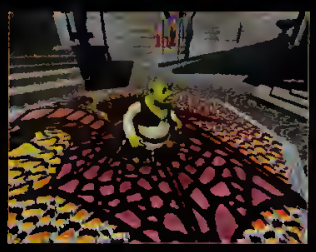
–Expert Gamer September 2001

The production values are movie-like...They'll wonder if you are playing the game 'Shrek', or watching the movie *Shrek*. And people will get hooked.
– cnn.com May 2001

All new environments! Plus, New characters designed by Todd McFarlane!







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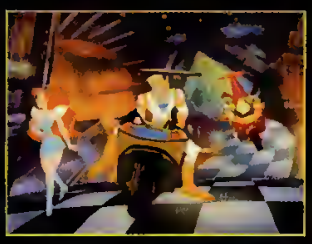
Retroview

November 1984

How to make a bad situation worse

While PCs and arcades were doing just fine in 1984, the U.S. console market was a smoldering ruin. Coleco's A.D.A.M. arrived as a buggy, poorly designed mess. Sixty percent of the units that originally shipped were returned as defective, though Coleco maintained that only 5% were actually defective. The others, they claimed, had only been returned because consumers couldn't decipher the owner's manual.

Atari was also swirling in confusion. It announced numerous consoles, including the 7800, which boasted 100 moving objects onscreen at a time and 256 colors. Unfortunately, Warner then dismantled the company and sold off the pieces. The arcade division went to Namco and then went on to release the innovative but unsuccessful *I, Robot*. The console and home computer divisions went to newly fired Commodore founder Jack Tramiel, who installed his three sons in positions of power, laid off some 75% of the work force, and set about leading the company straight into oblivion.



■ **Despite the console industry's woes, games like *Spoce Ace* continued to push the arcade envelope**

Thankfully, the sun was rising in the East. In Japan, Nintendo's Famicom sold 2.5 million units and 15 million cartridges during 1984.

What we were playing

Consoles may have floundered, but arcades and computers were flying

■ **1942**

■ Platform: Arcade
■ Publisher: Capcom

■ **THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY**

■ Platform: Apple II, others
■ Publisher: Infocom

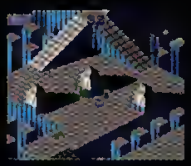
■ **KUNG-FU MASTER**

■ Platform: many (Arcade shown)
■ Publisher Data East

■ **RAID ON BUNGELING BAY**
(WILL WRIGHT'S FIRST GAME)

■ Platform: many (C-64 shown)
■ Publisher: Broderbund

■ **MARBLE MADNESS**



■ Platform: Arcade
■ Publisher: Atari Games

Top ten movies of 1984

1. Ghostbusters	$238,632,124
2. Beverly Hills Cop	$234,760,478
3. Indiana Jones & the Temple of Doom	$179,870,271
4. Gremlins	$153,082,102
5. The Karate Kid	$90,815,558
6. Police Academy	$81,198,894
7. Footloose	$80,035,402
8. Romancing the Stone	$76,600,000
9. Star Trek III: The Search for Spock	$76,400,000
10. Splash	$69,800,000

...and in the real world

■ *Miami Vice* debuts, immediately becoming the coolest show on television. The show would last for five years and would unfortunately trigger a nationwide fashion obsession with five o'clock shadows, shoes worn without socks, and pastel muscle shirts.

■ *Murder, She Wrote* also debuts, immediately vying for the title of lamest show on television. It would last for 12 years.

■ Commodore purchases Amiga corporation.

■ Incumbent President Ronald Reagan and VP George Bush are re-elected in a landslide, garnering 59% of the vote. Their Democratic opponents were Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro, the first female vice-presidential nominee in history.

■ *Cheers* fans are introduced to Diane's new beau, Frasier Crane, played by Kelsey Grammar. To date, Grammar has played the character for some 17 years over two series, a record in primetime television.

■ The Supreme Court rules that recording television programs on a VCR for reviewing in the home does not violate copyright law.

■ The first of the high-profile musical charities debuts, when Band Aid releases *"Do They Know It's Christmas?"* in an effort to raise support for African famine victims. It would be followed by Live Aid, Farm Aid, and Hear 'n' Aid, among others.

■ The Domain Name system is incorporated into what was quickly evolving into the Internet.

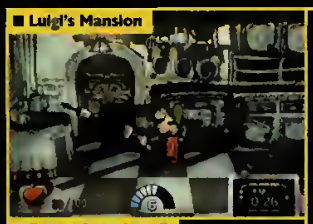
NextGen
Next Generation magazine
11/01

BackwardsCompatible

It wouldn't actually be silent at all, what with all the screaming and everything. Page 100. Don't read too much into page 53 — neither Keenan Ivory Wayans, Isaac Hayes, nor Jim Brown are playable characters in this game. Too bad. **What is "Cel-da"? Page 30.** In space, no one can hear Polly say it wants a cracker. Page 42. **It's hard to look tough while wearing a tiara, but it helps if you also wield giant metal claws. Page 60.** Horns, schmorns. We still think it looks like a Viking's helmet. Page 105. **Brad likes his booze. Page 22.** Lovingly detailed with high-quality automobile paint, lit by neon running lights, and clean as a whistle under the hood. A typical hot rod, or the coolest PC ever? Page 27. **So you want an Xbox on Day 1, but didn't fall for any of those bundled pre-order screw-jobs? Here's the plan. Page 91.** We sometimes leap around the office with swords just like this. Of course, we usually wear pants. Page 69. **If everything's supposed to be eternally dark, should there really be all these candles everywhere? Page 34.** Most of outer space is empty. Perhaps in tribute, there wasn't a whole heck of a lot at Spaceworld, either. Page 12.

NextMonth GameCube Launches

■ Luigi's Mansion



■ Rogue Squadron II

■ Wave Race Blue Storm

■ Super Monkey Ball

■ GameCube hits stores on November 18. Will you be ready? With next month's launch guide, you can be sure that you are

NextGen 12/01 on sale November 16, 2001

Smart readers have already subscribed. To find out how you can save money and guarantee your copy, turn to the subscription card insert between pages 112 and 113

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Company weekend update: NEXT GEN BOAT RULEZ!!! When riding the American River Middle Fork be sure to look for "Megan's Folly," the recently named class I rapid. Highside! Highside! Mad props to Mo and "Sellermania" for being able to puke in public and still show their faces around work. "You think I'm embarrassed or somethin'?" asked an indignant Mo. Shout out to Chris Charla for turning 30 and to Aaron Loeb's new house — sorry we didn't show up there buddy. Also this month: Jen turns 29 (and learns to bellydance!) and founding editor Neil West turns 32. Don't forget your Geritol, old friend. To former editor Trent Ward, thanks for inviting us to your wedding, pal — sure you sure that invite. Finally, what we're playing this month: *Tony Hawk 3*, *Devil May Cry* and Eddy Fries' timeless classics, *Princess* and *Frog Boxya*.

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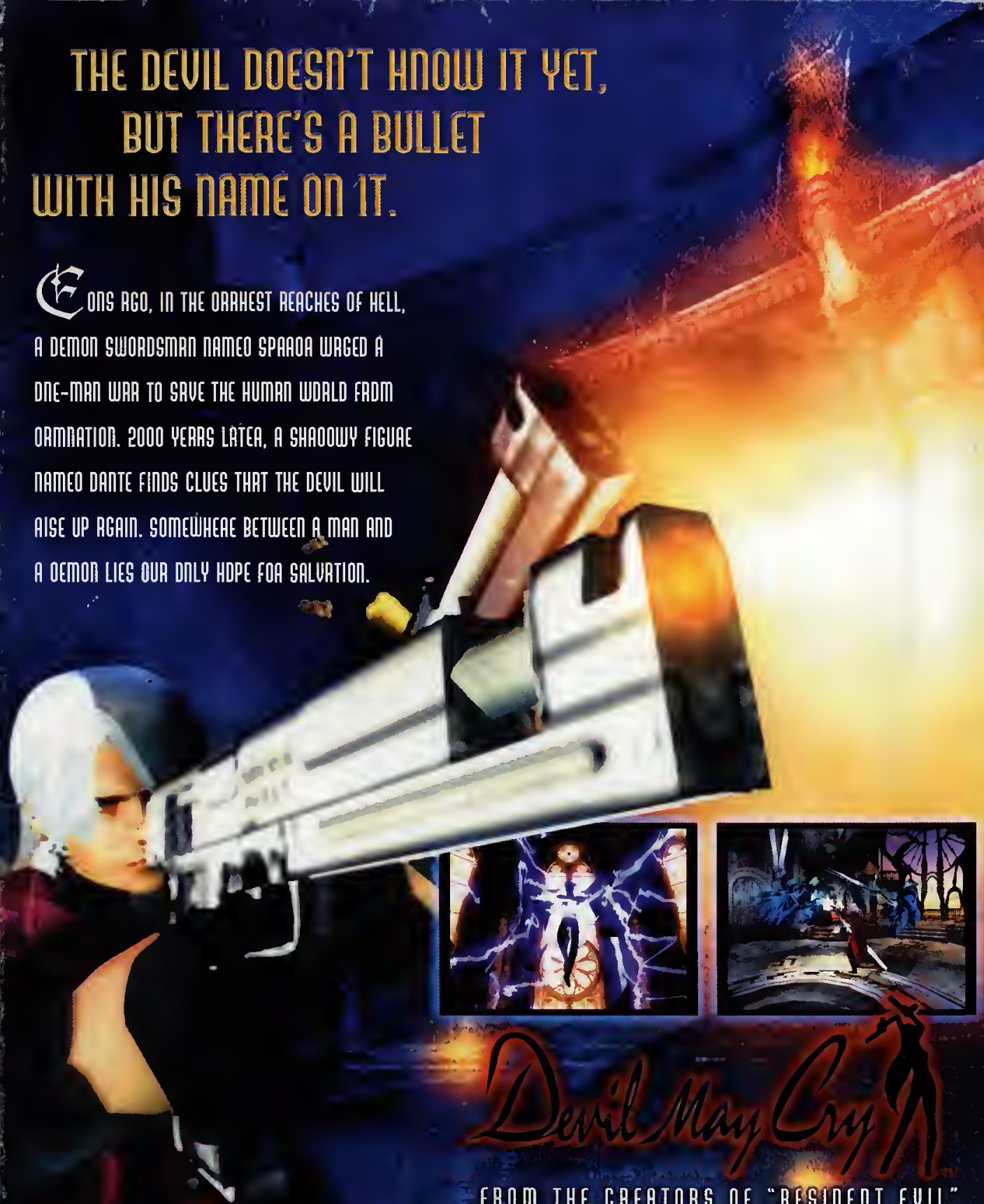

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